THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

OCTOBER 50c

special INTERNATIONAL issue

UNITED STATES
Lawrence Treat
John D. MacDonald

ENGLAND
Andrew Garve
Michael Gilbert

ITALY
Alberto Moravia

FRANCE
Georges Simenon

RUSSIA
Leo Tolstoy

GERMANY
Heinrich Böll

JAPAN
Junichiro Tanizaki

CANADA
James Powell

and stories from

SOUTH AFRICA

NEW ZEALAND

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

SOUTH AMERICA

Save 33⅓%

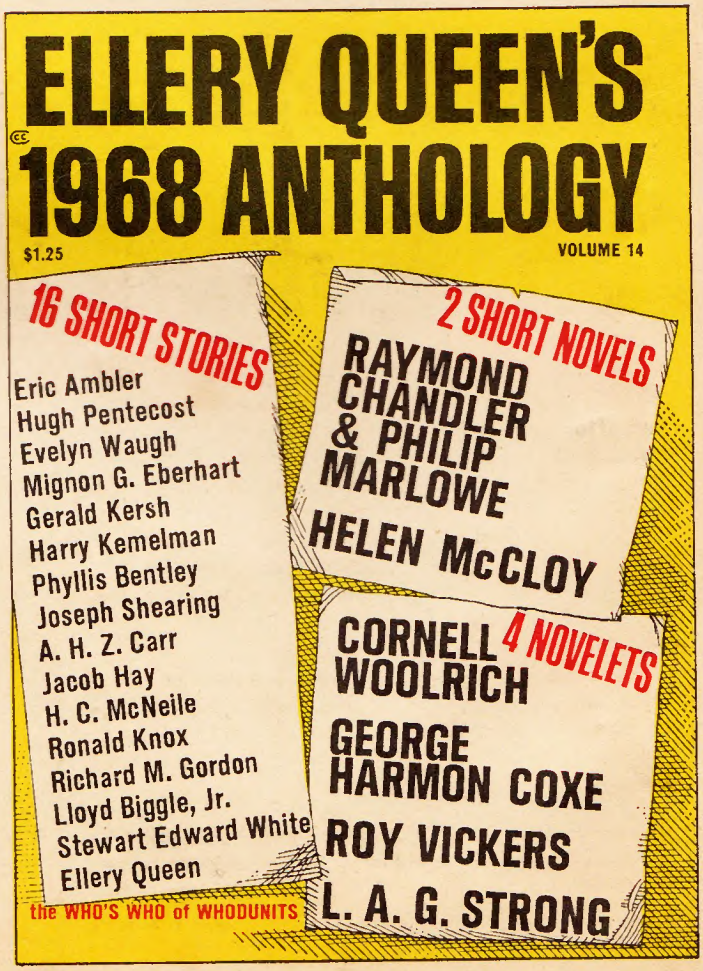
By Reserving Your Copy Now!

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER FOR REGULAR EQMM READERS

Enjoy the new Ellery Queen Anthology before the September 14th on-sale date and, instead of the regular newsstand price of $1.25, save 1/3 by ordering now.

Copies have been reserved at the special pre-publication price of only $1. There will be no 25¢ postage charge on advance copies so you will save a total of 50¢. All pre-publication orders are **guaranteed** to be shipped from our printer, on or about, August 15th.

Don't miss this great collection of spine-tingling mysteries in the 320 page 1968 Edition. Send for your ADVANCE copy today!



ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY 1968 Edition
505 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

EQ-1067

Please send me_____copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY 1968 Edition Volume 14. Enclosed is $1 for each copy (outside U.S.A. please add 25¢ for postage and handling). I understand my copy (copies) will be shipped to me on or about August 15th.

Name_____
(please print)

Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

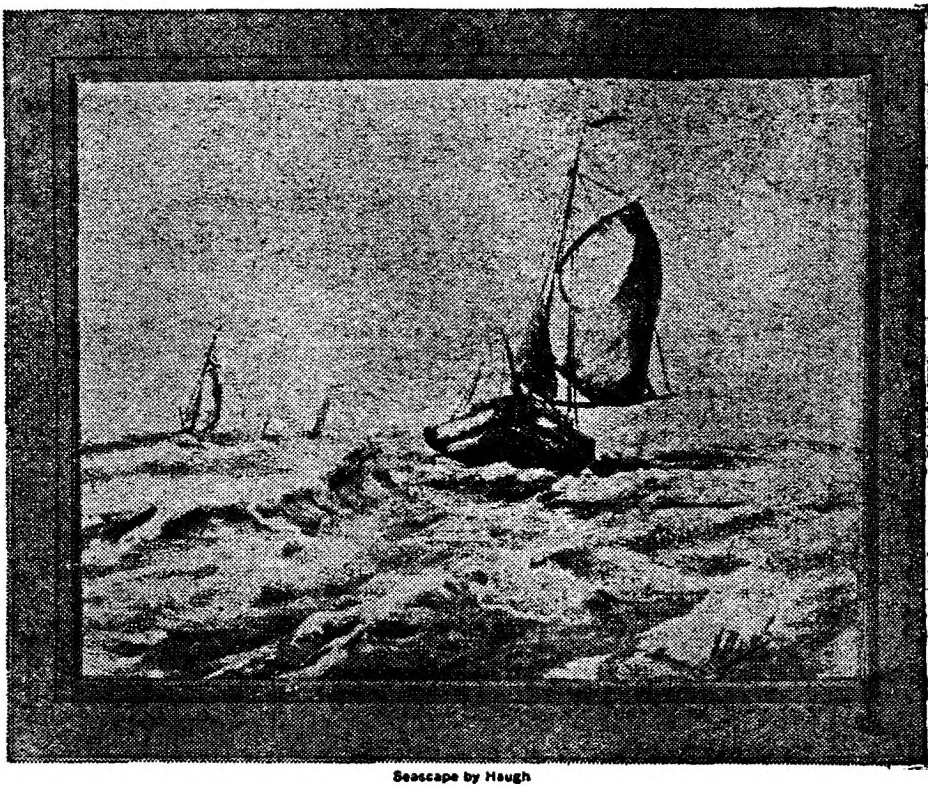
Please include your Zip Code

(Turn to page 42 for extra coupon)

Original Oil Paintings

(NOT Reproductions)

Special European Art Purchase! Comes to You on Heavy Canvas, Framed, Ready to Hang, Large 14" x 17" overall from France, Austria, Holland!



Seascape by Haugh

AMAZING OFFER! Each painting originally $20, now yours for $2.95 on special closeout. Now you can afford the finest. Not reproductions but original framed oil paintings you will be proud to hang in your home. Not only for their exquisite full-color beauty but for their possible increase in value. The artists finally selected (after 2 years of searching) are from Holland, France and Austria. They are fine and unusually talented craftsmen . . . men who we think may achieve greatness. Each painting on extra heavy canvas is signed by the artist. Comes to you mounted and mat framed, ready to hang and beautify your home. Large 14" x 17" size. Country of origin is indicated on the back.

Offer Will Not Be Repeated!

Because our supply is limited, orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis. You must be delighted or return on our amazing 12 month exchange privilege. 100% Guaranteed. Each a $20 original value! Mail no risk coupon today!

WORLD ART GROUP, *"Home of World Famous Artists"*

Now Yours Only **$2.95** FRAME INCLUDED

WORLD ART GROUP, Studio 10 EQ
54 Church Ln., Westport, Conn. 06880

Please send my selections of original oil paintings @ $2.95 each on canvas, mounted and mat framed entirely free on full money back Guarantee if I am not delighted. My Choice of subject matter is:

☐ landscape ☐ floral
☐ seascape ☐ fruit

☐ 1 for $2.95 ☐ 2 for $5.50 ☐ 4 for $10.

Please add 25¢ per painting for PP & Hdg.
I enclose $

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____

☐ SAVE MORE! 8 Paintings Only $20. Postpaid. (Save $3 PP & Hdg.) Extra paintings make exciting gifts.

TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE

Published by the AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW!

A must for every family's bookshelf!

only $5.95

Is there anything more precious to you than your own good health and that of your family? Now, here's the one all-inclusive book that will help you preserve and protect that good health.

TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE answers your health and medical questions with reliable, factual, and up-to-date information . . . just as your family doctor would. The sources of information are those he uses to keep informed on the latest developments in medicine.

In clear and readable language are facts about cancer, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney diseases, stroke . . . birth control, child care, care of the expectant mother . . . chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever . . . mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and hundreds of other subjects.

AT YOUR FINGERTIPS IN AN EMERGENCY

Of special interest to you are the sections on emergency help. EXCLUSIVE in TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE is the section listing 65 significant symptoms. It tells you how to recognize when annoyances such as a headache, indigestion, skin rash, and bleeding could be a symptom of a more serious condition. You'll find out when a doctor should be called at once and when you can safely wait and see if medical attention is necessary.

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine
505 Park Ave, N.Y., N.Y. 10022

Please send me _____ copies of

TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE

☐ Check or Money Order for $5.95 each is enclosed. We pay postage and handling. NY State residents please add 5% sales tax.

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

EQ-067

FIRST AID MANUAL: How many times have you wanted to have a really good first aid manual close at hand? With the TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE section on first aid, you can find out what to do in dozens of emergencies—broken bones, severe burns, insect, dog, or snake bites. Learn what to do for poison ivy, how to give artificial respiration, how to help those suffering from electric shock, frostbite, heat stroke, severe or uncontrollable bleeding, and other dangerous conditions. The most important emergency advice is printed on the back pages for handiest reference.

In other sections of TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE, you will learn when and how to teach your maturing child about sex, marriage, and rearing a family. Included are illustrations on the male and female reproductive systems.

FULLY ILLUSTRATED, EASY-TO-READ

There's much more in TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE . . . 640 pages and 90 chapters rich with important health information. It's factual, easy-to-read, and beautifully illustrated in color. There are over 300 photographs, drawings, and diagrams.

Yes, here you will get all the information you seek in one handsomely-bound, hardcover volume. TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE is well indexed, comprehensive, reliable, and authoritative . . . the best family health guide on the market today.

HERE'S WHY IT'S A VALUABLE BOOK

Sound and authoritative advice is the hallmark of TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE. The AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION spared no effort in making TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE the finest book of its kind available.

The AMA drew upon the most brilliant medical minds in the world to prepare TODAY'S HEALTH GUIDE; over 200 physicians, surgeons, educators, psychologists, clergymen, and medical writers contributed to the book, and the completed manuscripts were reviewed by others equally talented.

The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S *Mystery Magazine*

from ENGLAND

THE TERRORISTS — Michael Gilbert — 6

LINE OF COMMUNICATION — Andrew Garve — 152

from the UNITED STATES

NO BUSINESS FOR AN AMATEUR — John D. MacDonald — 24

C AS IN CRIME — Lawrence Treat — 141

from GERMANY

LIKE A BAD DREAM — Heinrich Böll — 43

from NEW ZEALAND

BEST LAID SCHEMES — Noel Bosker — 49

from JAPAN

THE THIEF — Junichiro Tanizaki — 57

from ITALY

ONLY THE DEATH OF A MAN — Alberto Moravia — 67

from RUSSIA

THE MAN OF GOD — Leo Tolstoy — 73

from CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE CLASSIC SEMERAK CASE — Josef Skvorecky — 80

from SOUTH AMERICA (Colombia)

ENEMY IN HIS HANDS — Hernando Téllez — 95

from FRANCE

INSPECTOR MAIGRET PURSUES — Georges Simenon — 99

from SOUTH AFRICA

THE QUEAR GEST — M. Patricia Doble — 111

from CANADA

THE BEDDOES SCHEME — James Powell — 119

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH — Anthony Boucher — 117

PUBLISHER: *B. G. Davis* — EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 50, No. 10, Whole No. 287, OCT. 1967. Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc., at 50c a copy. Annual subscription $6.00 in U.S.A., and possessions and Canada; $7.00 in the Pan American Union; $7.00 in all other countries. Editorial and General Offices, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions, and other mail items are to be sent to 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Office of Publication — 10 Ferry St., Concord, N. H. 03301. Second-Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. *© 1967 by Davis Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.*

MPA

JOEL DAVIS, *Assistant Publisher* — CLAYTON RAWSON, *Managing Editor*

LEONARD F. PINTO, *Production Director* — CONSTANCE DI RIENZO, *Executive Editorial Secretary*

IRVING BERNSTEIN, *Art Director*

the *NEWEST* spy-and-counterspy story by

MICHAEL GILBERT

first publication in the United States

An assassination plot—wheels within wheels, web within web, far-flung threads forming a confused pattern, complexity within complexity, plot within plot—and all seen as through the wrong end of a telescope, or while wearing someone else's eyeglasses . . . until, finally, the wheels mesh, the webs merge, the pattern takes shape, the complexities simplify, the plot clarifies. That is the kind of story you are now about to read . . .

THE TERRORISTS

by MICHAEL GILBERT

THE UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE untwisted the green cord from its button and opened the buff envelope, signing the attached docket carefully—as though he was signing away something important, like his job or his character. "C.D. 12" . . . "State Visit of the Ruler of —yes, the security arrangements. The Minister attaches particular importance to the coordination of security arrangements."

The Undersecretary skipped the opening three paragraphs. He had read them too often.

"It is known that both anti-Royalist factions have representatives in this country. The Taqi—translated 'the Silent'—have an organization centered in North London. It is a small but dangerous activist-terrorist group. It was concerned in the unsuccessful attempt to blow up the V.C. 10 carrying the—um, yes, the Ruler's Finance Minister to London in September. It has recently been strengthened by the arrival of a new leader, Dr. Shivastrias, late of Beirut American College. This group is under observation, and arrangements have already been made to penetrate it."

The Undersecretary imagined that a job of that sort would be handled by Fortescue's people. He felt a momentary sympathy for the Taqi. Being penetrated by Fortescue would be an uncomfortable experience—probably fatal in the long run.

"The second group, known as Colonni—translated 'the Twelve'—is receiving active assistance from the Egyptian Government and is operating under the cover of the U.A.R. Embassy in London. It will

Copyright © 1967 by Michael Gilbert.

therefore be more difficult to penetrate. This is not important at the moment since—for reasons see my C.D. 11—they are at the moment cooperating fully with our security forces."

The Undersecretary signed. It was all very confusing. He was glad that the docket was marked to him *For Information* and not *For Action*. He was not a man of action. He probably owed his present commitments to the fact that he had won a half-blue for chess at Oxford. He remembered the attempt on the Ruler's Finance Minister. The bomb had been spotted at Beirut and removed from the baggage compartment of the V.C. 10 only a few minutes before the plane was due to leave. He himself had been on the plane, and had been told about the incident after they had landed at Heathrow.

He had sweated, in his official car, all the way from London Airport to Whitehall.

"Any *why* did you assault him?" asked Mr. Power, the Highside magistrate.

The prisoner, a stocky man wearing gray-blue flannel trousers held up by a length of tarred cord, a khaki shirt, and a tie lent to him by the head jailer for the occasion, said, "Yaroop glubby yarab."

The Court Missioner said, "I think, your Honor, the accused is trying to explain that he struck this man because he was an Arab."

"Is the accused English?"

"I understand so."

"Then why doesn't he speak English?"

"When he gets excited he has trouble with his speech. I've had one or two talks with him, and I can usually understand what he says."

"Then you'd better act as interpreter," said Mr. Power. "Ask him why he goes round assaulting Arabs."

The accused seemed to have understood this. His face, which was very red, turned white with the suddenness of a neon sign switching colors. He shouted, "Twenty stripes. Been in the Royal Navy. Strung up and flogged. Look, I'll show you."

He started to take off his shirt.

"Stop that at once," said Mr. Power. "Officer, stop the prisoner undressing. I won't have it. If there's any more of this behavior, he'll have to be handcuffed. Now—Gavigan—that's your name, isn't it?"

The man nodded. His excitement seemed to be subsiding.

"You say you were flogged in the Royal Navy. That's impossible. Flogging was abolished in the Navy more than a hundred years ago."

Mr. Power managed to say this in a way which implied that he thought it was a great pity.

The Missioner said, "I gather what happened, sir, was that he

deserted his ship some years ago in a port in this Arab State. He got into trouble over a native girl he was living with. He was arrested and flogged. Things were rather primitive then—that was before oil was discovered, in the reign of the present ruler's father."

At the back of the dark courtroom Dr. Shivastrias stirred on his perch. He had been assured that his own case, a trivial matter of a parking violation, would be the first one dealt with. He had agreed to plead guilty. He had already been squatting for an hour on one of the penitential benches which had been designed to discourage the public from listening to Mr. Power dispensing justice.

Now, suddenly, he was no longer bored or irritated. He was interested. Dr. Shivastrias was a clever man, and like many clever men he knew when to give impulse its head. So he sat forward, and listened.

"It was hardly a trivial assault," Mr. Power was saying.

"Well, no," said the Missioner.

"The accused was working as a washer-upper in this café, with the Arab he assaulted?"

"The Arab was a vegetable hand."

"As I understand the matter," said Mr. Power, in the tone he reserved for his rare official jokes, "he was very nearly *minus* a vegetable hand. The accused attempted to push him into this potato-peeling machine. He could easily have lost some of his fingers."

"I'm afraid that is so, sir."

Mr. Power said, "I can't treat that as a light matter." He looked at Gavigan, who looked back at him without insolence, but without any real interest. His thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. Possibly he was thinking of the Arab girl for whom he had suffered twenty lashes.

Mr. Power made up his mind.

"I want a medical report," he said. "Stand remanded for seven days. Bail fifty pounds."

The Inspector who was prosecuting said, "On his own recognizances?" There was definitely a question mark at the end of it.

"Well—no. I suppose I can hardly do that."

"Excuse me, your Honor—"

Dr. Shivastrias was on his feet.

"I would be prepared to give bail—that is a bond, is it not?—of fifty pounds for this man."

Mr. Power conferred with the Clerk of the Court. Then he said, "You are a householder? And a doctor?"

"That is so, your Honor."

"I understand that you have some sort of nursing home? Would it be your intention to look after the prisoner until he is brought up here again?"

"That would be my intention."

"Well, it's very good of you," said Mr. Power. "Very public-spirited. Remanded into your custody,

and on your recognizances, for seven days."

The Inspector was the only person who did not seem to be entirely happy about the arrangement.

For some reason Highside has always attracted revolutionaries and cranks. Possibly they like the fact that it looks down on the sprawl of London but is not involved in it.

Dr. Shivastrias' house stood within a stone's throw of the very hall in which the First Bolshevik Congress had been held in 1907, and almost within sight of the cemetery where Karl Marx lies buried. It was in a street which had seen better days, but had not yet taken the final step down into slumdom. Most of the houses were subdivided. Some were mere boarding houses, like the one directly opposite, which housed three black students, two commercial travelers, a retired Merchant Navy captain, and a man with a small private income and a gray beard, who spent his days walking the streets, carrying a placard foretelling the end of the world.

Behind drawn curtains in his front parlor Dr. Shivastrias and his three resident patients surveyed the newcomer.

Gavigan had a half-empty glass of whiskey and water in one hand. The drink had cheered him up and loosened his tongue. He was apparently inarticulate only when he was angry. Like a car stalling when you overchoke the engine, thought the doctor. He found the symptom interesting.

"Let me introduce my house guests," he said. "This is Abaf."

Abaf had a squat, rounded figure. Seated, he looked like a Buddha. In motion he had some of the bounce and thrust of a good halfback. His face was seamed and twisted with what looked like wrinkles. It was only when you looked closer that you saw they were deep-lying scars.

"And Djuma." Djuma was huge, fat, and sad. He spoke awkwardly, having only the stump of a tongue.

"And Khalid." This was a sharp little man, with the appearance of an accountant. He wore steel glasses. On the rare occasions that he smiled, the gold fillings in his teeth gleamed like the sun breaking unexpectedly through a cloud.

"All of us have one thing in common." The doctor's sweeping gesture included Gavigan. "We have all suffered. My friends, Abaf and Djuma, have been tortured by the hirelings of the Ruler—Abaf with hot irons, and Djuma, when he would tell them nothing, had the fore part of his tongue cut off."

"The swine," said Gavigan. His face, the doctor noticed, was starting to go red again.

"For that reason, and for many other reasons, we propose to destroy him."

"All right talking," said Gavigan. "He's safe in his own country. Can't get at him."

"But you are wrong," said the doctor. "He is in England at this moment."

It really was interesting, he thought. The tide of red turned to scarlet, and then to purple, as the small veins in Gavigan's face engorged.

"He arrived two days ago on a state visit. In three days more he will depart."

Gavigan was on his feet, mouthing incomprehensibilities. He moved across the room, lunging out, like someone playing Blind Man's Buff and beginning to get angry. The four men watched him. Dr. Shivastrias wore contact lenses which glittered coldly as he turned his head.

That evening, with Gavigan safely in bed, they discussed the matter again.

"Clearly the man who throws the bomb runs a great risk of being caught," said the doctor. "If that man is Gavigan, his record will shield us. He has a personal animosity against—"

"But can he be trusted to do the job properly?" interrupted Khalid. Of the three he was the only one who would question his leader.

"It is a simple task. It demands no finesse."

"We shall have to obtain authority."

"Certainly. A message shall go tomorrow, by the emergency route. You must take it, Abaf. The answer will come the day after. Today is Tuesday. The old man does not terminate his visit until Friday. There is time."

"Can we keep Gavigan quiet until then?"

"He smokes the weed," said Abaf. "I know the signs. Give him enough of the weed and he'll sleep until Friday."

The doctor considered the matter. He knew as well as any of them the properties of bhang, which is both a drug and a medicine. He said, "We will try a small dose tomorrow. Much depends on how accustomed he is to it. We want no mistakes."

At ten o'clock the next morning Abaf, dressed in dark-blue airline overalls, rode his motor scooter into London Airport. He rode without even slowing down, through two gateways, both of which were labeled *Strictly Private. Airport Personnel Only. All Passes Must Be Shown,* and propped up his scooter outside the back door of the canteen building. Abaf walked through it with the air of privilege which is more effective than any number of passes, and made his way up the passage to a clatter of dishes which announced the kitchen.

He opened the door and stood for a moment, surveying the scene. He said something to a kitchen

hand who was hurrying past and the man pointed to a good-looking black-haired boy, dressed in the uniform of a waiter. The boy had picked up a tray, and was coming toward them. Abaf backed out into the passage. For a moment he and the boy were alone. Nothing was said, but an envelope passed from hand to hand, then the boy sped on down the passage.

Abaf went back to his scooter and returned by the way he had come. He would have liked to have cadged breakfast from one of his compatriots in the kitchen, but he knew enough not to overplay his luck.

The young waiter carried his tray into the crew quarters where four complete crews and members of half a dozen others were having breakfast. At the far table the crew of a Syriac Airlines Comet were eating together. As he served them he slipped the note into the pocket of the youngest and prettiest of the air hostesses.

Seven hours later the air hostess, whose name was Anna, walked with the other members of the crew through the flight-personnel exit of Beirut Airport. Dusk was beginning to fall, and the headlights of the cars could be seen, coming on all along the three-lane dual highway which joins the airport and the town. Two airline cars were waiting for them.

The third officer, who had plans of his own, tried to organize Anna into the one he was traveling in, but the girl said, "I'm sorry. I've forgotten. I have a telephone call I must make immediately. Don't wait for me. I'll join you at the hotel."

She turned on her heel and walked back to the Airport. The third officer wondered sourly who the lucky man was.

When Abaf, on his motor scooter got back to Dr. Shivastrias' house and reported the success of his mission, he found the doctor and Khalid examining Gavigan, who was lying flat on his back, with his mouth wide open, snoring. There was a half smile on his face. His dreams were evidently happy. There was also a trace of froth at the corners of his mouth which seemed to cause the doctor some concern. He wrote out a prescription and handed it to Khalid, who examined the scribble suspiciously, and scuttled away with it.

There was a branch of a large drug-store chain on the corner of the road, but Khalid ignored both this and the chemist's shop a hundred yards farther up. He moved rapidly along the pavement, with his peculiar crablike gait, until he came to the third, and smallest, of the drug stores. He waited in its dark and cramped interior until two girls had made their minds up about a hair rinse, paid for it, and gone out. Then he pushed the prescription across the counter to the

young man in a white coat, whose face was as dark as his own.

As Khalid did so, he gestured with his hand. The young man raised the flap, and Khalid slid through, round the screen which hid the mysteries of the prescription department, and through a door, closing it behind him. On a shelf just inside the door stood a telephone. Khalid dialed a number carefully, muttering each letter and number to himself as he did so.

By the time he finished his call the prescription had been made up and stood, neatly wrapped, on the counter. Khalid picked it up and went out. From the beginning to the end of the transaction not a single word had been spoken.

In Beirut the crew of the Syriac Comet breakfasted on fruit juice, scrambled eggs, well-made coffee and badly made toast. It was, as usual, a placid meal. The third officer was watching Anna's jawline and throat as she munched and swallowed her toast. She had been particularly sweet to him the night before. So kind, and so forthcoming, that he had managed to push into the back of his mind, like an unwanted Christmas present at the back of a dark closet, the thought that she was only stringing him along, that she had a boy friend lined up in Beirut.

She had sworn to him she knew no one in the City except the people she did business with. Her banker, her accountant. That much was understandable. Like all regular air crews she no doubt had her money stowed in different "pockets" in their main ports of call. But if it was business, why had she stayed *behind* at the Airport to telephone, passing up a free lift to the hotel, when she could just as easily have used the telephone there? If all she had to talk about was business, why was she being so damned cagey about it?

The hall porter approached the table and whispered something to Anna who said, "Excuse me, please."

As she followed the porter out of the dining room, there was a worried look on her face. Her instructions had been quite clear—neither to send nor to receive messages in public.

The voice at the other end of the telephone was as clipped and precise as that of a lecturer addressing a class of backward students.

"I regret having to telephone you at the hotel. There was no other way to reach you in time. It will be better if you say nothing at all—just listen. A passenger will be boarding your aircraft at Cairo. He travels under the name of Ben-Massimo. You will recognize him at once—he has a short square beard and will be wearing a black- and gray-checked topcoat. You will help him in any way he requires—in particular, if he has any object he wishes to get past the au-

thorities at London Airport. He will put it in the pocket of his topcoat and you will take charge of it. Thank you."

"Thank *you,*" said Anna, but she was speaking to a dead telephone.

The third officer, who had come out into the hall, said, "Your banker gets up very early, doesn't he?"

"Of course," said Anna. "That's why he's so rich."

She had had no difficulty in recognizing Ben-Massimo. He came on board at Cairo, carrying a brief case which he placed in the rack and a coat which he handed to Anna. As she hung it on top of the other coats in the space behind the seats, she felt that there was, indeed, something heavy in the pocket.

She had her dark-blue air-hostess' satchel ready, empty, over her shoulder. During the moment of confusion, when newcomers and transit passengers were sorting themselves out, she slipped her hand into the pocket of the coat and extracted a parcel. It was the size of a box of a hundred cigarettes, but a great deal heavier.

During the flight she had little opportunity to study her charge. He kept his nose buried in a book, and she was occupied with a child who was sick and a middle-aged man who was very frightened. At London Airport she saw the passengers off, chanting the ritual, "Goodbye. I hope you have enjoyed your journey?" to each in turn. If Ben-Massimo had enjoyed his journey, he said nothing about it. He stumped off across the tarmac to the Airport bus without a backward glance.

When the last of the passengers had gone, she walked with the other three hostesses toward their quarters. She was untroubled about the package which was weighing down the satchel on her shoulder. She knew that although, in theory, they might be searched, it was something which rarely happened. The only thing that puzzled her was what she was to do with the package. But she supposed that the young waiter, who had given her the original message, would attend to this.

When he appeared with their tea, she could see from his face that something was wrong. She made her excuses and joined him in the passage.

"There is trouble," he said. "Your man was stopped and questioned by security control."

Anna experienced a sudden sinking sensation. It was as though, walking along a firm pavement, she had felt it shift at the first tremor of an earthquake.

"It may be all right," said the boy. He seemed less worried than she was. "I will be able to tell you soon."

In ten minutes he was back, smiling. "A fuss about nothing," he said. "Something to do with his

visa. If you will hand over the packet now."

"I most certainly will," said Anna. She felt so light-headed in her relief that when, a few minutes later, the third officer suggested a night in Town she accepted with an enthusiasm which surprised him.

At eight o'clock that evening Gavigan rolled over on his bed, opened his eyes, yawned, and sat up. He looked remarkably wide-awake.

He tiptoed to the door and listened. The house was quiet. Downstairs he could hear the slow and irregular clicking of a typewriter, as if someone was writing a long letter using only one finger of each hand.

Gavigan smiled happily to himself. He was thirsty. Public houses would be open. Money? He felt in his pockets and brought out sevenpence in coppers and three florins. It would do for a start. The situation might require thought later on.

He reached the hall. The typing continued. He opened the front door.

It was at this point that he discovered he was in stockinged feet. He had been wearing shoes when he went to bed. He was certain of that—a newish pair of white sneakers, given to him by the Missioner. Someone must have taken them off while he was asleep and hidden them. This seemed to him an unwarranted liberty.

Then he saw, under the hall stand, a pair of galoshes. Fair enough. He tried them on. They were a little large, but useable. As he walked down the front path his feet slapped softly against the concrete.

Outside the front gate he paused for a moment, as if considering his next move. Up the street he could see lights and hear the sound of traffic. It was a main road and a main road meant an increased probability of public houses. It also meant noise and confusion and people and, very likely, policemen. For the moment he felt himself unequal to any of this. The inside of his head was still whirling round in a very curious way. A couple of drinks would put it right, but he wanted to drink in quiet and seclusion.

He swung to the left and bumped into someone who had been approaching quietly along the pavement.

"Sorry, sorry."

"Not at all," said the other man. He spoke in a gentle, cultivated voice. "My fault entirely."

Gavigan saw that he had a straggling gray beard and was carrying a placard on the end of a pole. The placard said: *Where will YOU spend eternity?*

"What's all that?" said Gavigan suspiciously.

"It's a message," said the man. "I

have six of them. This is the one I carry on Thursday."

"Who said it's Thursday?"

The man looked worried. He began to count on his fingers. Then his face cleared. He said, "It *must* be Thursday."

"How do you *know?*"

"Because Thursday's the day I carry this placard."

"That's all right then," said Gavigan. "Let's go and have a drink. Do you know somewhere quiet?"

"There's a little place round the corner. It's not pretentious. I go there sometimes."

"Just the ticket," said Gavigan.

When they got there, the man propped up his placard carefully inside the door of the Saloon Bar and they approached the counter.

"What would you like to drink?" said the man. "This is on me."

"Whiskey," said Gavigan. "Fair does. You can pay for the first round. I'll pay for the second." He fingered the money in his pocket and made a quick calculation. "After that I may have to borrow some money."

"That's quite all right," said the man. "I've got plenty."

It was about an hour later when Gavigan reverted to something that had been worrying him.

"Suppose you made a mistake all along," he said, "and it *was* Wednesday."

"Well?"

"But you *thought* it was Thursday."

"Suppose I did?"

"Then you'd take out that board you've got with you."

"On a Wednesday?"

"That's right. On a Wednesday."

"I'm afraid that's not possible," said the old man. "That isn't the one I take out on Wednesdays. It's the one I take out on Thursdays."

About ninety minutes later, a lady wearing a long white mackintosh came into the bar. Gavigan jumped up, knocking both drinks off the table, and shouted, "Bloody wog." He then picked up a vase full of plastic flowers and threw it at the woman. There was an instant uproar.

The woman screamed. The middle-aged man with her aimed a blow at Gavigan and hit a lady in black who, without a word, picked up a pint glass tankard and hit the man with it. By this time Gavigan's companion had got hold of his pole and placard and was using it as a flail.

The landlord and his son came across the bar in a practiced surge. They grabbed Gavigan, by one arm each, and rushed him through the door which led to the street, using his face to open it.

He pitched out into the arms of Dr. Shivastrias, Abaf, and Djuma, who had spent the last two hours searching every public house in the High Street.

When the landlord and his son turned back to quell the continuing riot in the Saloon Bar, the three

men hurried Gavigan down the street. He put up no more than token resistance. His recent burst of activity seemed to have drained him of energy.

Five minutes later they had him back on his bed. "Sot," said Dr. Shivastrias. "Drunken bum."

"We should have locked his door," said Abaf.

"It never occurred to me that he could wake before tomorrow at the earliest. He must have the constitution of an ox." The doctor stared down at Gavigan. The ex-seaman was lying flat on his back. His eyes were closed and the smile was back on his face.

"This time," said the doctor, opening a black bag, "we must make no mistake."

Downstairs a bell trilled.

The three men looked at each other. Then the doctor snapped the bag shut and said to Abaf, "Lock this door, turn out the light, and keep quiet. If this man wakes, or tries to make any noise, you will do what is necessary." And to Djuma, "Come with me, but keep behind me, out of sight."

Then he led the way downstairs. As he reached the door, the bell trilled again.

The man who was standing on the front step was wearing a checked topcoat and a muffler which nearly concealed his short square beard. He said, "It is permitted to enter?" He spoke in French. Without waiting for a reply he came through into the hall and himself closed the door. He said, "You are Doctor Shivastrias? Yes? I have a message for you."

"Please come in here," said the doctor. He also spoke in French but with much less assurance.

The stranger brushed past his host, walked into the room the doctor had indicated, and stood with his back to the fire. Then he removed his hat, unwound his muffler, put it away in his topcoat pocket, then took off the coat and hung it over the back of a nearby chair. He did all this without speaking. His manner suggested perfectly that he was the master of the house, that Dr. Shivastrias was the intruder.

He said, "What have you done with that man?"

"He is upstairs, asleep, in his room. Might I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

The stranger hesitated, as if he grudged even that minimum of explanation. Then he drew a card from his wallet and held it out, retaining one corner of it, as a busy man might show his first-class season ticket to a train conductor.

When the doctor spoke again, the deference in his voice was noticeable. "I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before," he said, "but one has heard—"

The newcomer inclined his head graciously.

"You got our message?" the doctor inquired.

"I got your message and I came here as quickly as I could. I hoped to be here in time to prevent you making fools of yourselves. That man about whom you wrote—it was the one whom I observed, struggling with the three of you outside the door just now?"

"The same. He has proved himself an irresponsible sort, Excellency. But he might still be useful."

"Explain, please, *exactly* how you met him."

Dr. Shivastrias embarked on his story. The newcomer listened with silent and unwinking attention. The doctor's explanations trailed to a finish. The newcomer allowed a full minute to elapse before he spoke. Then he said, "It is clear that I am too late to save you from *all* the consequences of your folly. I may be able to save you from the worst of them. Is it not absolutely clear to you that this man is a spy? Planted in your organization by British counterintelligence?"

"But how—"

"By the simplest method in the world. You are brought to Court on a trumped-up charge. You said yourself that you expected to be dealt with first. But no. You are detained there. Why? So that you will see this man and hear his story. The magistrate, who, of course, is in the plot, then hands him over to you."

Dr. Shivastrias sat down suddenly. His face had gone gray.

"If that is true—"

"Of course it is true. Even his escapade tonight was planned. He went out to pass on whatever information he had got so far. How much have you told him?"

The doctor's mind was in such a whirl that he had to concentrate desperately, head in hands. What *had* they told him?

"Everything," he said at last. "That we had plans to kill the Ruler. That he could help us."

"You told him how you planned to do it? And where?"

"I fear so. Yes. The bomb was shown to him"—the doctor gestured toward the sideboard—"also that we had hired this little office, overlooking Victoria Street, which the Ruler will pass on his way to the station when he goes to Paris."

"I see," said the newcomer. "That is unfortunate. Nevertheless it may not be fatal to the plan. I followed the man when he left this house tonight. From the moment he left it, he was in the company of an old man—a religious fanatic, I would judge. He was never alone. In my view he staged the disturbance in the public house to throw the old man off, so he could telephone to his employers. But then he immediately ran into you."

"In that case," said Dr. Shivastrias with relief, "we can make sure that he never does speak."

The newcomer smiled, "Do I understand that it is now your intention to kill him?"

"Of course."

"How fortunate that I was sent to you. To leave a corpse behind you would be stupid and unnecessary. I do not know what your plans are, but I imagine that the four of you are returning to join the glorious revolution? Your flight is booked? Perhaps you plan to be actually at the Airport awaiting a telephone message that your attempt has succeeded?"

"Such is our plan," said Dr. Shivastrias slowly. "It was for this reason that we sought another hand to throw the bomb. It was feared that the man who threw it would be seen to do so and would therefore have very little chance of escape."

"I agree with your reasoning," said the newcomer. He reached out for his coat and extracted from its large side-pocket a neatly wrapped package. As he spoke he was breaking the seals and removing the wrappings.

"No bomb will be thrown. The method was always clumsy and is now unnecessary. I have brought over for you a much more effective weapon."

He had the wrappings off now, and handed the doctor what looked like an ordinary camera.

"Be very careful. Do nothing until I tell you. Now—press the side button—that's right—and open up the camera. Externally, it works in a normal way. The sighting apparatus is contained in those two square lenses. You look through one. The object is seen in the other. The only difference you will note —yes, you can look through it—is that the second lens contains crossed wires. Focus the intersection on any object—set the range finder for the appropriate distance —it is calibrated in yards, that small scale on the right. You see it? Then if one depresses the plunger—only I beg of you *not* to —"

"So. It is a gun?"

"Yes. A gun. It fires a magazine of six nine-millimeter bullets. It is accurate up to fifty yards. And it is well silenced—the silencer is in the bellows of the camera. From what point, exactly, were you planning to throw your bomb?"

"From an office on the second story of the building on the corner of Artillery Row and Victoria Street. It is a room with one window and a very small balcony."

"Excellent," said the envoy. "Anyone who sees you will assume that you are photographing the procession."

"Sees *me?*" said Dr. Shivastrias.

"My dear fellow," said the envoy. "Of course. Since the error in this case was committed by you, it is only fitting that you should correct it, don't you think?"

"Children," said Mr. Fortescue. "Yes. But like children, cruel. And because they are irrational, sometimes they are very dangerous indeed."

The Undersecretary said, "Are there many of them?"

"Not many, no. But strategically placed. In the lower echelons of the airlines—in canteens and restaurants. You will also find a number of them in chemists' shops. The Pharmaceutical Degree of Beirut University is accepted in most European countries." He paused. It occurred to him to wonder whether the Undersecretary, who was in a high state of nervous tension, was taking in what he was saying.

Then Fortescue added, "The people we are dealing with—the Taqi, the Silent Ones—are the most dangerous. They have suffered violence, and are therefore violent. They got their name a great many years ago, in the days when the Ruler's special punishment for conspirators was to chop off the front part of their tongue. He said they should keep the half they ate with but not the half they talked with."

The Undersecretary shuddered. He said, "But you have them under control?"

"We have done what we can. And we have had some luck. Their house in Highgate has been under observation for a month or more. Then we learned from the other organization that Ben-Massimo, the Syrian terrorist, was being sent over by the home organization to find out about the timing of the attempt and to see that there was no slip-up."

"How did you discover all that?"

"From the rival organization, the twelve Colonni, who want the attempt to fail in order to discredit the Taqi and give *them* a chance to seize power."

"But how did *they* know?" said the Undersecretary. He was finding Mr. Fortescue's omniscience distasteful.

"They got their information from one of the Taqi, an intellectual called Khalid. They bought him about a year ago. He sends information to them through a second cousin of his who works in a chemist's shop off the Archway Road. The Colonni pass the information to the U.A.R. Embassy, who pass it on to us. Not all of it, of course, but anything which will damage the Taqi."

The Undersecretary collected his whirling thoughts, and said, "When you first told me that you had penetrated the Taqi organization, I thought you were referring to this sailor they seem to have picked up—what's his name?—Gavigan. I assumed he was one of your operatives."

"No, no," said Mr. Fortescue. Really, he thought, one of the drawbacks of the upper echelons of Intelligence work was having to explain things to Undersecretaries. The Minister had assured him that this one was different. Good mind, first-class degree, chess player. If this was the Minister's idea of a

first-class mind—"Such a maneuver would have been far too obvious. People like the Taqi *expect* to have agents planted among them. A very different approach was necessary. I knew that Ben-Massimo would come to London sooner or later. He is a professional midwife to assassinations. When the time is ripe he appears, to superintend the accouchement. He never takes any part himself. If he wishes the operation to proceed smoothly he simply gives it his expert assistance. If he wishes it to fail—and he sometimes does—he will insure that, too. It was Ben-Massimo who informed the Beirut customs police that a bomb had been placed in the V.C. 10 bringing that Finance Minister here. You remember the occasion?"

"I do," said the Undersecretary, with considerable feeling.

"On that occasion Ben-Massimo's employers considered that *their* local group was not ready for a coup. Now it *is* ready. His mission here is to insure that the attempt *be* successful. This is why we picked him up at the Airport and removed him to a nursing home that we run at Sunningdale. He is very comfortable. We had a substitute ready—one of my best men, Mr. Calder. All that was necessary was a beard and an authoritative manner. We knew that none of the Taqi in London had ever met Ben-Massimo."

"It was a clever idea," said the Undersecretary, managing to imply, as people who use that adjective usually do, that he thought very little of it; "but what could your man Calder hope to achieve? The group was under surveillance, and riddled with spies."

"Our main object was to prevent them using any sort of bomb. In their case, it would be a homemade and thoroughly dangerous weapon. He supplied them, instead, with a silencered gun concealed in a camera. It is an extremely efficient weapon—or would be, had we not had the firing pin removed. When it fails to go off, Dr. Shivastrias will assume a fault in the mechanism. But no one will believe him. The remainder of the group will assume that he lost his nerve and probably kill him. The Colonni, on the other hand, will assume that Ben-Massimo, whom on this occasion they were employing, has let *them* down, and *he* will have some explanations to make—which may or may not be believed."

"I can see," said the Undersecretary acidly, "that the whole operation is under expert control. The Ruler will be on his train in thirty minutes. I trust that nothing untoward happens from now on."

Mr. Fortescue crossed his fingers, but just too late.

The telephone was buzzing. The Undersecretary picked it up, and said, "It's for you."

Mr. Fortescue listened for a mo-

ment, then said into the telephone, "Calder must try to head him off. I'll have the building surrounded as quickly as possible." And to the Undersecretary, "Trouble. Bad trouble."

Half an hour earlier, the peace of Highside had been rudely disturbed. The front door of Dr. Shivastrias' house burst open and Abaf appeared. There was a fan of dark, dried blood on one side of his face, and fresh blood was oozing over it, scarlet against black, from a deep cut on his forehead.

He stood for a moment in the sunlight, swaying.

A gray-bearded figure paused on the pavement. He was carrying a pole topped by a placard which said, appropriately, *SALVATION IS AT HAND*. Without appearing to hurry, but wasting no time at all, he went through the front gate and planted the pole with a vigorous thrust in Dr. Shivastrias' flowerbed. Then he advanced on Abaf, put his hands under his arms, and propelled him back through the half-open front door. Then he steered Abaf into the living room and sat him down in a chair. In the process a good deal of blood transferred itself onto his coat.

"No time to lose—" Abaf's voice was distant and indistinct, as though he was speaking through a thick muffler.

"I can't do anything sensible," said his visitor, "until I find out what's happened, can I?"

"Who are you?"

"This isn't the time or place for a formal introduction," said the man crossly. *"WHAT HAPPENED?"*

"A man who was staying here," said Abaf. "He woke up. He went mad. He was like a wild beast. We tried to restrain him. He hit Djuma with a chair. I think perhaps he is dead. Khalid ran away."

"But you didn't," said the man. "Good show. He seems to have given you a nasty dent all the same. Where is he now? And come to that, where's Dr. Shivastrias?"

This seemed to sting Abaf. He jumped to his feet and said, "The doctor—we *must* warn him. Great danger. This man found—something—he took it with him." He fell flat on his face on the floor.

The old man moved with surprising speed and agility into the hall. There was a telephone on the side-table; he dialed a number, heard the metallic click, like the tumblers of a safe, as the automatic selectors operated, and then heard an unfamiliar voice at the other end.

"If Fortescue is in your office," he said, "I'd like to speak to him. Would you tell him that it's Behrens here and it's very urgent."

There was a moment of silence in which he could hear a scrabbling noise from the living room, where Abaf was trying to get to his feet. Then the comforting, matter-

of-fact voice of Mr. Fortescue said, "Well?"

Mr. Behrens said, "That man Gavigan has gone berserk. He's knocked out two of the men here and frightened off the third. Now he's gone after Shivastrias. And he's got the bomb with him."

Dr. Shivastrias found that he was sweating. He was a planner, not a doer. He and the Undersecretary had a lot in common.

It was airless in the dusty, barely furnished little office. He went across, swung open the window, and stepped out onto the balcony.

Victoria Street was far from crowded. The Ruler had made little impact on the national consciousness. But a lot of people had read the press handouts, or been alerted by the police traffic notices, and were standing about on the pavement, ready to raise a cheer for the royal personage who was going to accompany the Ruler to the railway station.

Three policemen on motorcycles drove in line down the middle of the street. There was a faint commotion from Parliament Square.

Dr. Shivastrias walked back into the room and picked up the camera. His hands were barely steady. But he thought it would be all right if he rested the camera on the stone ledge of the balcony.

The sounds grew louder. A car appeared with a very senior policeman in the back, wearing a flat cap and silver insignia on his shoulders. After him a closed car. Dr. Shivastrias had studied the order of the procession. The Ruler would be in the sixth car, an open Daimler used for such occasions.

The doctor balanced the camera on the ledge, then tilted it downward. It was at this moment that he heard the noise he wanted least to hear in all the world. Heavy footsteps, pounding up the stairs.

As he swung round, the door flew open and Gavigan appeared. He had in his right hand a small metal box, of the sort that workmen sometimes carry their lunch in. His face was bright red with anger and exertion, his blue eyes were staring, and his breath was coming in dangerous gusts.

He charged forward, swinging the metal box.

Dr. Shivastrias shouted, "Stop! Stop!"

He might as well have spoken to a runaway express train. Gavigan did not try to avoid him; he ran straight at him, swerved slightly at the last moment, and felled the doctor with a swing of his thick left arm.

As Dr. Shivastrias fell, he realized why Gavigan was in such a hurry. Another man was coming after him. With a feeling of relief he recognized the short square beard and the brown face. It was Ben-Massimo. If anyone could deal with such a crucial situation, surely Ben-Massimo was the man.

The newcomer took everything in with one quick glance. He saw the doctor on the floor, struggling to get up. He saw Gavigan on the balcony. The noise outside had increased to a roar.

Gavigan's arm swung back. The newcomer grabbed the metal box and tore it from him. It went slithering across the room, straight under the doctor. A blinding sheet of intense white flame, apocalyptic thunder, and a cloud of dust which billowed slowly out of the window as the plaster ceiling suddenly disintegrated.

The dust covered the bearded man who was lying flat on top of Gavigan on the balcony. It drifted down into the street where several hundred people, suddenly silent, were staring upward, mouths agape.

The royal personage said to the Ruler, "It's probably children letting off fireworks. They get *so* excited, you know. *What* was that you were telling me about your last year's oil revenue? I didn't quite catch—"

The Undersecretary finished reading the report. He had skipped the detailed description of Dr. Shivastrias' injuries, compiled by an enthusiastic but insensitive police surgeon. Since the doctor was dead, the precise nature and number of his wounds seemed immaterial. Mr. Calder had cracked three ribs, broken a collarbone, and was suffering from concussion. Gavigan, it appeared, was totally unharmed.

The Undersecretary supposed that it was all quite satisfactory.

à la **Black Mask**

The narrator in this novelet is Bud Morse, a night-club pianist. The night club was owned by the Howler, a wartime buddy of Bud's, and the Howler was in trouble. The Howler had a good thing going at Quin Pines, but a protection racket decided to cut itself in for a large slice of the action; so Bud decided to cut himself in to help his friend, Howler Browne . . .

An excellent example of the "pulp" magazine novelet of the late forties . . .

NO BUSINESS FOR AN AMATEUR

by JOHN D. MacDONALD

I CAN PROBABLY EXPLAIN WHY I got so upset about Howler Browne's troubles if I tell you that in our case it was a little different than the usual relationship between the owner of a roadhouse and the gent who plays his piano. After I was out of the army a year and still not getting anywhere, he took me on out of hunger, and also because twice while we were both working for Uncle Sugar, I pulled details for him so he could sweeten up a dish he had located in Naples.

He hadn't talked much about this club he owns, the Quin Pines, and after he met me on the street in Rochester and I told him my troubles and he took me on and drove me out there, I was agreeably surprised to see a long low building about two hundred feet back from the highway, with five enormous pines along the front of it. It looks like class and a high cover charge. It is. It pulls the landed gentry out of their estates and loads them up with the best food and liquor in the East. And the Howler makes a fine thing out of it.

I guess he got the name of the Howler because of the way he flaps his arms and screams at the ceiling when things don't go just right. He's a big guy, with a fast-growing tummy, a red face, and crisp curling black hair—the kind of a guy who can wear a Homburg and look like the Honorable Senator from West Overshoe, North Dakota. But he has a large heart of twenty carat which probably

Copyright 1947 by Popular Publications, Inc.: originally titled "Dead to the World."

wouldn't wear well on a politician's sleeve.

I'm Wentley D. C. Morse, the first name and the initials having suffered a contraction to plain Bud. I seem to appeal to the babes with frustrated maternal instincts, probably because I have a nice fresh round face and a well-washed look. I'm not above taking advantage of such inclinations.

I know that when the Howler took me on, he expected me to be a floperoo, a citizen he could stick up at the piano at times when the band happened to be tired. He offered me a room, food, and fifty bucks a week. I snapped at it so quick I nearly bit his hand. I've been slapping a piano around ever since I've been able to climb up onto the stool. I have my own style, whatever that is, and a long string of startling failures at auditions. I have about twenty-nine varieties of rolling bass in my left hand. I like to mess around with improvised discords with the right. I can play the normal corn, just like any other boy with two hands, but I like my own way and sticking to it had kept me in bread crusts until I ran into the Howler.

I did about an hour the first night. I got some surprised expressions from the dowager clique and saw one old party choke on his celery when I stuck some concert counterpoint into the middle of Gershwin. When some kids tried to dance to me, I switched the beat on them until they stumbled off the floor, throwing ocular stilettos over their shoulders. I don't like being danced to. Somehow, it seems silly.

It was nice clean work but I didn't have much chance to talk to the Howler. After a week I began to build up a discriminating clientele. The Howler stopped and listened to the banging of hands after a long number and ordered me a blue spot. In two weeks I was set and beginning to get some small mentions in the trade papers.

Then I began to notice things. The first thing I noticed was that the Howler's cheeks, instead of being nice and round and pink, began to hang like a couple of laundry bags on Tuesday morning. Once I walked out into the kitchen and heard him screaming. He was also flapping his arms. The kitchen help stood around with wide eyes, waiting for him to burst. I stood by to enjoy it.

"Why, oh why," he hollered, "did I ever get into this business? Am I nuts? Am I soft in the head?"

While he was gathering for another burst, I interrupted. "S'matter, Howler? Somebody get a buckshot in the caviar?"

He spun around and said, "Oh! Hello, Bud." He walked out of the kitchen. I shrugged at the pastry chef. He shrugged at the dishwasher, who grinned and shrugged at me. I went back out through the place and up to my room.

The next night we had the fight. It didn't last long, but it hurt business. The cocktail lounge is to the right as you come in the front entrance. The dining room and dance floor is to the left. The joint was packed, as it usually is around eleven. The Howler wasn't around. I was due to play during intermission, so I was in the cocktail lounge waiting for the end of the set.

Two citizens in dark suits started arguing with each other at one end of the bar. One was tall and one was short, but they both had the same greased black hair and the same disgusting neckties. Before anybody could move, the big one backed the little one over to the door and across the hall. At the entrance to the dining room he wound up and pasted the little guy. It was a punch and a half.

The little guy went slamming back into a group of tables occupied by the cash customers. He knocked over two. One of them had four full dinners on it—half eaten. The big one left in a hurry before we could stop him. The little one got up and felt his chin. He clawed the cabbage salad out of his ruffled locks and departed. He refused to leave his name. Then about forty very stuffy citizens departed with cold looks.

I was watching the new hat-check girl give them their stuff when the Howler came up to me and asked me the trouble.

"Couple of citizens had fisticuffs. A big one fisticuffed a little one right into two lobster dinners, a steak, and an order of roast beef. These people figure you're running an abandoned institution, so they're shoving off."

He spun me around and his face was red. "You dope! Why didn't you hold them?"

"Me? I play the piano. Besides, the big one left in a hurry. And what could you hold the little one for? For standing in front of a big fist?"

He walked off, but I could tell from his back that he was as mad as he could get. I hurried in and started slapping the piano around. I probably didn't play too well, as I was wondering why I had been jumped. After my half hour was over, I dug up the Howler. He was upstairs, and still mad.

I walked up to him and said, "Am I a friend, or just another employee of the Great Browne?"

That jolted him. He grabbed my arm and said, "Okay, so you're a friend. Why?"

"Come on." I didn't say another word until I had led him downstairs and out into the parking lot. I picked a crate that looked comfortable. We climbed into the front seat and I waited until we both had cigarettes going before I continued.

"Look, my boy. I know something is eating on you. You don't act right and you don't look right. Now what is it?"

He waited a while and I could tell that he was wondering whether to tell me. Finally he sighed and sank down into the seat. "Shakedown, Bud. The curse of this business. You get going good and then some smart monkeys figure you got dough to give away just to stay out of trouble."

"How much?"

"A thousand a month."

"Are you paying?"

"Not yet. That's why the little scrap tonight. Just a warning. If I keep holding out, we get a free-for-all and then there's no more customers. Maybe the cops close me up. The county boys are tough."

"Can you afford it?"

"Maybe. It'll be okay for now while the boom's on, but come a slump and I dig into the bank to make payments. You see, I can't deduct the payoff as a business expense. I don't get any receipt. It has to come out of my end after taxes."

"Have you talked to the cops?"

"What's the use? The new group has hit all the joints for miles around. Some of them went to the cops—no help. We got no data on them. They're slick. That's why I wanted one or both of those guys who brawled. Thought I might squeeze something out of them."

"How did they contact you?"

"Phone. Very slick voice. Polite. Told me I needed assurance that my club would run smoothly. Told me he wanted a thousand in tens, twenties, and fifties put in a brown envelope on the first of each month. Then I give it to my daughter Sue and send her walking up the road with it to the state highway in the middle of the afternoon. She's just turned eight. He says that if there's any trouble, they give Sue a face she won't want to grow up with."

I cursed steadily for many long minutes.

"That's just what I said," he remarked, "only I said it louder and faster."

"You couldn't take a chance on telling that to the cops and letting them try to get on the trail after the kid's okay?"

"Hell, no. If I pay to these characters, I do it straight. I can't take a chance on the kid. There's not enough dough in the world to mean that much to me."

"Anything I can do?"

"I guess not, Bud. Just beat on that piano the way you've been doing, and we'll jam enough customers in here to make the thousand look like a fly bite. You're doing great, kid. But even if . . ." His voice trailed off and he snapped the butt out onto the gravel.

"But even if what?"

"I'm afraid that if we make more dough, they'll ask for more dough. I can't help but feel that they've got somebody planted on me. The guy on the phone knew a lot about the business. Too much."

"How many new guys do you have?"

"Maybe fourteen in the last two months."

"You've been watching them?"

"They all look okay to me. I can't figure out which one it could be. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the guy on the phone was guessing."

"I could help look."

"You could stay out of it. I hired you to give me piano music, not protection from a protection mob."

He climbed out of the car and slammed the door. I heard his footsteps crunching on the gravel as he headed back for the joint. I sat and had another cigarette and did some thinking. A few couples came out and climbed into their cars—but they didn't drive away. The music rolled out across the green lawn and the stars seemed low and bright. It was a good night, but the taste for it had sort of left me. I wanted to help the Howler.

He paid off on the first. I stood with him and watched Sue trudge up the road in her blue dress, the big envelope in her hand. The sun was hot. She went over the hill and out of sight on the other side. We both wanted to run after her but we didn't dare.

In the next twenty minutes I saw the Howler age five years. His face was white and his eyes were strained. He kept snapping cigarettes into his mouth and dragging twice on them before flipping them away.

I grabbed his arm when I saw something coming over the hill. Sue came into sight and the color came back into his face. We shook hands solemnly. When she was twenty feet away, he dropped on one knee in the dust and she ran into his arms, giggling. He held her roughly and slapped her where you slap children with either affection or correction.

He held her at arm's length and said, "Now tell Dad what happened."

"A black car stopped and a man stuck out his hand and said, 'Got that envelope for me, Sue?' and I gave it to him and they drove away."

"How about his voice?"

"He kind of whispered."

"What kind of a car was it?"

"I don't know but I think it was an old one. Black, too."

"Did you look at the license like Dad told you?"

"Sure, but it had dirt all over it. I couldn't read any numbers."

"Could you recognize him if you saw him again?"

"Golly, no! He held a handkerchief up to his nose like he was going to blow it, but he didn't."

We stood and looked helplessly down into her bland little face. She looked hurt, as though she had failed the Howler somehow. He patted her on the head and told her she had done okay, so she went skipping off to her mother in the bungalow the Howler had built down over the crest of the hill from

the Quin Pines. I had met Mrs. Browne, a tall blonde with steady eyes, but I didn't see her often, as the Howler has the excellent rule of keeping his wife away from the joint. More joint owners should try it. I wondered how she was reacting to the ugly choice of having to use Sue as a courier for a shakedown mob.

Even though I wanted to do something—anything—to help the Howler, I couldn't think of a starting place. For the next few weeks he walked around looking as gay as a wreath on the door. And still the customers flocked in. Nothing will ever beat the old formula of good food, good liquor, good music, and no clip games. Whenever I asked him how things were going he would shrug and look grim.

It must have been the day before the second payoff day that I burst into the Howler's office without doing any knocking. I had dreamed up the hot idea of getting hold of a midget and dressing it in clothes like Sue wears and sending it down to the highway with a cannon and a chip on its shoulder. I was chewing over the idea and I didn't knock.

The Howler looked up from behind his big desk and he wasn't happy to see me. A man I had seen around the place sat in the visitor's chair. He was a tall slim blond gent with a steel-gray gabardine suit, white buck shoes, a hand-painted tie, and a languid manner.

I said, "Excuse me, Howler. I should have knocked," and I turned to go back out.

"Wait a minute, Bud. You probably are going to have to look for a job soon, so you might as well know the score. Meet my lawyer, John Winch. John, this is Bud Morse, my piano player and good friend."

Winch jumped up and grabbed my hand. I liked his warm smile and tight handshake. "I'm glad to meet you, Bud. I've enjoyed your work a lot. I like your *Lady Be Good* best, I think."

I like the way I play that one too.

I perched on the window sill and the Howler said, "It looks like we're at the end of the line. John can't think of a thing we can do, Bud. The mob, whoever they are, want two grand a month. I can't swing it. I told them I would have to go out of business and the guy on the phone said that was okay with him. I've gone over the books with John and we can't see any way out of it. I'm going to sell out and get out of here."

Winch looked steadily at me and said, "And the trouble with that is that he'll only get the value of the land, building, and fixtures. You can't sell these places on the basis of a capitalization of the earning rate. It just isn't done."

I felt sorry for the Howler. His big red face sagged down over his collar. His eyes were as empty as yesterday's lunch box.

"Damn it, why don't you fight?"

He spread his hands. "Nothing to fight with, Bud."

"This doesn't sound like you, boy. Besides, give me another couple of days to poke around. I got a lead."

They both leaned forward. New life came back into the Howler's face. "What is it? Come on, give!"

I opened my mouth to tell him and then decided against it. It was too vague—it would sound silly. Once when I was in college I worked in a shoe store and I learned about shoes. I know good ones when I see them. Even though the Howler had told me just to play the piano, I had done some poking around among the new employees.

I'd noticed that a fellow named Jake Thomson, the new dishwasher, was wearing a pair of beautiful shoes. Looked like a handmade last. Narrow and well stitched. For a guy making twenty-five bucks a week plus two meals a day, they didn't look right. It made me wonder and I had been keeping an eye on him. But you can't tell a guy not to sell out because his dishwasher wears good shoes.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I got to keep it to myself until I develop it a little more." They nagged at me but I kept my mouth shut.

Finally the Howler said, "Okay, John. Forget the sale for a while. I'll pay off the two grand tomorrow and take a chance on Bud."

Winch shrugged and I left before the Howler could change his mind.

The bee was on me. I had to develop the shoes into a big lead in nothing flat. Because I had opened my big mouth, I was costing my boss another $2000. I went up and sat in my room and did a little thinking. I had thought about Thomson enough so that it was easy to visualize him—a slight quiet little man of about forty, with thin lips and oversize hands, receding hairline, and a nose that had been busted a few times. I had already found out that he lived in the Princess Hotel, a fleabag outfit in nearby Casling.

There was something about him that I couldn't put my finger on. Suddenly I remembered what it was. I snapped my fingers and hit myself on the head with the palm of my hand. I realized that without actually noticing it, I had seen him coming out of the kitchen and hanging around the new hatcheck girl.

Then I did some more thinking, I like the looks of the little gal, a round-faced blonde with kind of a Dutch air about her. She looked as though she scrubbed her red cheeks with a big brush. I remembered the lights in her blue eyes and the trim, pert little figure that went with that pretty blonde head. Jerry Bee her name was.

I glanced at my watch. Four thirty. She would be coming back

on duty about now. I couldn't take the time to case her carefully. You have to take some people on trust. I decided to enlist her in the Save Howler campaign.

I went downstairs and found her sorting out the tags for the evening business. She smiled up at me with professional cheer and said, "I didn't know you wore a hat, Mr. Morse."

"The name is Bud, and I got to talk to you. Alone. Quick."

"Why . . . ah . . . sure, Bud. Is this a fancy line? You want to try to make a date or something?"

"I would, sometime, but not now. I got other things to talk about. You know where that grapevine thing is? That white wooden thing across the lawn? See you there in two minutes."

I walked off and went through the kitchen. Thomson was fiddling with the controls on the dishwasher. He didn't look up. I went out the back door and walked over the yard to the grapevines. I lit a cigarette and in about a minute she came hurrying across the grass, looking as cute as a bug and very earnest.

I gave it to her quick. "A mob is shaking the boss down. The mob has somebody planted in the joint. I figure it's Jake Thomson, the dishwasher. They're forcing the boss out of business. I've seen Thomson hanging around you. What's he said? What does he act like?"

Her mouth was a round O of amazement. Then when she realized what I wanted, she began to look disappointed. "Gee. He's just acted like any other guy. He all the time wants me to go out with him. I don't want to go out with no dishwasher."

"He hasn't hinted anything about having more dough than a dishwasher should have? He hasn't tried to sound important?"

"No. Nothing like that."

It was discouraging. I sighed and said, "Okay, Jerry. Thanks anyway. Guess I'll have to take it alone from here."

"What you going to do?" she asked, her eyes wide.

"I don't know. Follow him, maybe. Try to get into his room, I guess."

She stepped forward and grabbed a button on the front of my jacket. She twisted it in her finger and said, "Gee, Bud, that sounds so exciting. Do you think maybe I could . . . help?" As she said the last word, she slowly raised her eyes up toward me. I was surprised to notice how long her lashes were. That slow look flattened me.

"Sure. Meet me as soon as the joint closes." I stood and watched her walk back across the yard toward the joint. She was put together in the proper manner. I tried to put my cigarette in my mouth and found that my mouth was still open.

During the long evening I fretted about the job of following Thomson. I knew that having the gal along would make it easier if he noticed us. We could just be having a routine date. It wouldn't look as fishy as if he found just me on his trail.

The Howler is one of those people who like to have things all cleaned up before the joint is closed. That fit in nicely with my plans. It meant that Thomson would be running stuff through the dishwashing machine long after the last customer had left.

I strolled out into the kitchen a few times between my shows and tried to get a good clean look at him without him noticing me. There was nothing to see. He stood beside the splashing, humming machine and fed in the dishes with quick easy movements. I felt an all-gone feeling in my middle, and hoped that I wasn't wrong—and yet there was the matter of the shoes . . .

I told Hoffer, the statuesque citizen with the South Jersey accent who keeps a fatherly eye on most of the employees, that I was checking to see how many of our people brought their own cars. I didn't want to ask about Thomson by name, so I had to stand and look interested while he rambled through a long list. Finally he said, "And the dishwasher, Thomson, he drives an old heap that I make him park down in the pasture beyond the parking lot." I asked some more questions about matters I didn't give a damn about, then drifted off.

The half moon outlined the square frame of Thomson's car. Hoffer had been right when he called it a heap. It squatted in the tall grass looking like the nucleus for a junk yard. The fenders were frayed and it looked old enough to have a bulb horn.

I stood in the night breeze and listened. The music blatted away in the club a hundred yards behind me. I suddenly realized that if I was right, I could be given a large hole in the head. I shivered slightly and stepped forward to where I could read the license number with a match. Then I hurried back.

Jerry finally scurried out of the barn that the Howler had converted into living quarters for the women. It was twenty to three. The last bunch of noisy customers had driven away. From where I stood I could see the kitchen lights still blazing.

I didn't waste time talking. I grabbed her arm and hustled her over to my coupe. I opened the door and handed her in. Then I ran around the car and jumped behind the wheel. As I backed out and turned around, I noticed that her perfume smelled good in the closed car.

"What are we going to do now, Bud? Where're we going?"

"Thomson's crate is parked back

in the pasture. He'll be through pretty soon. We got to be where we can tail him no matter which way he goes."

She quivered and slid over close to me. "Gee, this is exciting," she said. I drove about two hundred yards down the road and backed into the driveway of our nearest neighbor. His house was dark. I cut my lights and we sat where some high bushes made the gloom thickest.

"We can have a cigarette, but we got to throw out the butts soon as he drives out. If he goes home, he'll go right by us here, out to the main drag."

She agreed and we sat quietly waiting. I found her hand and held it tight. Somehow it was less lonely, having her along—and yet I didn't let myself think of what I might be exposing her to.

Our cigarettes were well down when some dim lights flashed on in the pasture. I heard a roar as an aged motor clattered into life. We ditched the cigarettes, and in a few minutes the old car banged by the driveway.

Jerry gave a little squeak of excitement and I took out after him. I didn't turn my lights on. I stayed well back. I figured that the noise of his motor would cover any sound we might make. I hoped that no eager cop would notice our lights out and decide to get official.

The old car looked anything but ominous swaying along ahead of us. He kept up an average speed of thirty. He stopped at the corner and turned toward Casling. Somehow that was a disappointment. I had wanted him to go off somewhere and report to somebody.

I switched on my lights when we hit the town. He turned into a dark parking lot opposite the Princess Hotel. I drove on by and went around the next corner. I parked and ran back to the corner. I stuck my head around the bricks just in time to see him walk up the steps to the entrance. I gave him plenty of time to get out of the lobby, and then Jerry and I went in.

Once upon a time the Princess was a reputable second-class hotel. I could see from the lobby that it was now running about seventh. It smelled of stale cigars and cheap disinfectant. The sodden furniture and the greasy tile floor held the memories of thousands of traveling salesmen.

There was one light in the deserted lobby. It was over the desk. A young citizen with a bald head, oversized teeth, and a vile necktie gave us a quick glance as we walked up.

"Double room, sir?" he said with a faint leer, spinning the register around.

Jerry frowned at him and I said, "Wrong guess, friend. I got a present for you." I took out a five and creased it lengthwise and set it on the marble counter. It stood up like a little tent.

He reached for it and I tapped him on the back of the hand with my middle finger. They say that concert pianists can bust plate glass with their little finger. I can rap pretty good with my middle one.

He snatched his hand back and rubbed it. "Funny guy, hey?"

"Not at all. I just want to be understood before you fasten onto my dough. I got some curiosity about a guy who lives here. I want to know who comes to see him."

"Maybe I can tell you and maybe I can't. Some of the . . . uh, guests, pay a little extra so they won't be bothered with guys who are curious. Maybe the guy you want to know about has paid us some insurance."

I tried to think quickly. I decided that time was so short it wouldn't hurt to let him know. "Jake Thomson."

"Let me see. Thomson. Thomson." He riffled through a visible file that hung on the side of the cashier's cage. "Room two eleven. No insurance. Now what is it you want to know?"

Just then I heard steps clacking across the tile toward the desk. I winked at the desk clerk and slipped my arms around Jerry's waist. I edged her down the desk into the shadows and murmured in her ear, "Make out like you go for this." She put her hands on my shoulders and I went just a little bit dizzy.

I heard the man behind me say, "Give two eleven a buzz. Tell him, Joe is here."

The clerk stepped over to the switchboard. "Mr. Thomson? Desk. Man named Joe wants to come up. Okay?" He yanked out the plug and said, "Okay, go on up. You'll have to use the stairs. Elevator man's across the street getting some coffee."

I felt Jerry stiffen in my arms. When the man had clumped up the stairs, she drew me away from the desk and pulled my head down so she could get her lips close to my ear.

"Hey, I know who that was. Mr. Sellers. He runs the Western Inn. I tried to get a job there just before Mr. Browne hired me."

I turned back to the desk. "You can keep the five. I changed my mind. I'm not curious any more." I tossed it onto the marble counter.

He snatched it up. "Sure, sure, mister, sure. And don't bother telling me to keep my mouth shut. You're a five dollar friend. I don't get so many of those. Maybe I can sell you something sometime."

I walked slowly out with Jerry on my arm. We walked back to the car and sat and had a cigarette. She tried to ask me questions but I shushed her while I did some thinking. It had to be more than a coincidence. Night club managers don't go calling on other night clubs' dishwashers. It fitted in with the shoes.

I could tell by the set of Jerry's

shoulders that she was getting annoyed with me. "Hey, Jerry. Wait up. I had to do some thinking. The way I figure it, this guy Sellers is running the shakedown. Jake has to be his plant out at the Howler's place. Now all I got to do is tell the Howler and we'll have the cops give Sellers a going-over. But something may go on here. Do you think you can do something for me? Alone?"

I grabbed her hand again and she softened. "I guess so, Bud."

"You saw that all-night cafeteria across the street and down a ways from the hotel? It's got a big window in the front end. You go on in there and sit where you can see the front of the hotel. Nurse some coffee along and get nasty if they try to charge you rent for the table. I'll be back for you."

She didn't want to be left alone. She said no twice, and finally yes. I let her out and headed on back for the Quin Pines. I was restless and excited. I tried to shove my foot down into the motor.

I skidded into the parking lot in a shower of gravel. The club was dark. I slammed the door and sprinted over the knoll toward the Howler's house. I knew he would be glad to hear the new angle.

After about three minutes of leaning on the bell and banging the door, Mrs. Browne came and opened it a crack. Her hair was in curling gadgets and her eyes looked sleepy.

"Why, hello, Bud. What's the matter? Where's Stephen?"

I had to adjust to that. Finally I remembered that it was the right name for the Howler. "Isn't he in there? Isn't he asleep."

"He hasn't come back from the club yet."

I stood on one foot and then on the other. I had seen that the club was dark. I didn't know what to say. She looked anxious and less sleepy. Then we both heard it—the thin sharp crack of a shot. Small caliber. From the direction of the club.

I turned without a word or a look and raced back faster than I had come. I had to go over the knoll, across a corner of the parking lot, and across the back yard of the club.

I was making such good time that I skidded and almost fell when I hit the gravel. As I raced onto the dark lawn, a dim shape loomed up in front of me. I swerved and stopped. I must have looked as dark and mysterious to him as he did to me. The fact that he didn't look big enough to be the Howler decided me. I hesitated a fraction of a second and then dove at his knees. It is the last time in my life that I shall ever dive at anyone's knees —even a four-year-old child's.

You leave the ground with your hands spread out. You can't turn in the air. All the opposite party has to do is sling a large fist in between your paws. Automatically it will

catch you in the lower half of the face.

The world exploded in a ball of red fire and I lay on my back. The dank grass tickled the back of my neck. I heard footsteps hurrying across the gravel. I didn't want to sit up. I didn't want to move. I wanted to rest in peace.

I found something in my mouth. It turned out to be a small chunk of tooth. I sat up and grabbed the grass to keep from falling off the lawn. In the distance a car roared away. Some late crickets cheeped at me. I got to my feet just as Mrs. Browne came up. Her terry-cloth robe was white against the shadows.

"Mrs. Browne," I said softly and she hurried over to me. "I just got slugged by somebody who was leaving in a hurry." I didn't talk so well with a piece of my front tooth missing. The cold air hurt it. It made me whistle on the letter *s*. My chin was damp and sticky with blood. "Maybe the Howler's around here some place."

She held onto my arm and we circled the joint. We found him half in and half out of the side door. He moaned and I stumbled over him. I lit a match. He was face down, his hand opening and shutting against the concrete. Mrs. Browne moaned and slipped down beside him. I caught her before she hit her head. I slapped her conscious and made her wait while I brought my car over.

We wrestled the Howler into the front seat. She sat and held him up while I drove back across the field to their house. It strained me to get him onto the day bed in the study. While she was phoning the doctor, I pulled his bloodstained shirt out of his pants and took a look. He had a small hole right in the center of the plump mound of his tummy. It looked bad.

He stopped moaning and opened his eyes. "Bud!" he exclaimed faintly. "These guys . . . awful rough . . . turned out the last light and started to go home . . . fella backed me into the joint with a gun . . . told me to sell out . . . said the syndicate wanted to take over . . . made me mad . . . wouldn't let me turn on light . . . I tried to grab him and he shot me . . . burning hot . . . legs all numb . . . don't leave me."

I knelt down beside him and said, "Maybe it's all clear now, Howler. I found Sellers, the guy that runs the Western Inn, visiting our dishwasher. Hey! Did you hear me?" He didn't answer. His eyes were shut. He was breathing heavily.

Mrs. Browne came back in, her fingers woven together. "I don't know what to do. I telephoned the doctor. Should I phone the police right away?"

Just then we heard the door buzzer. She hurried to the front door. I heard her say, "Oh!" in a disappointed tone. John C. Winch, bland and tanned, walked into the room.

"Hello, Bud, I just stopped in to see—" He saw the Howler on the day bed and saw the blood. His jaw dropped. "What? When did it happen? Was he shot?"

"Yeah. Shot about twenty minutes ago. The doc should be here. What'd you come over for?"

"I was sleeping and I got a phone call. The man didn't tell me his name. Just said that I better convince Browne he ought to sell out or maybe he'd be shot. Told me that I better convince him quick. I dressed and hurried right over."

"Sell out be damned, Winch. That isn't the way to handle this thing. You got to fight."

"Sure, and get what Browne got. You look like you got some of it too."

I took a look in the mirror. I was a mess. My lips were three times too big and my chin and collar were blood-caked. Mrs. Browne had been standing by listening.

"I want my husband to get out of this, if he doesn't die." She sat in a chair and covered her face with her hands. Her shoulders didn't shake. She just sat there.

"What's the legal opinion about calling in the police?" I asked.

He rubbed his chin and glanced at the Howler. "I guess we can take a chance on waiting to see what the doc says. Maybe we won't have to. It might be best all around if we didn't."

"Leave the cops out of it if you want to, Winch, but I got a lead and I'm going to chase it. I'm beginning to get annoyed at this whole thing."

Before he had a chance to answer, the buzzer whined again and Mrs. Browne let the doctor in. He hurried over and started to push gently at the sides of the wound. I walked out without a word. I was scared, shaken, and mad. I climbed into my car and drove back to the parking lot. I didn't have any idea where to go or what to do.

Just as I reached the lot, a taxi turned in. Jerry got out. I could see her by my headlights. I stopped, walked over, and paid the man off. She stood there until he had spun around and headed out.

She grabbed me by the sleeve. "I watched and finally that man came out with Mr. Sellers. They went off in Mr. Sellers' car. I couldn't find a taxi to follow them. I don't know where they went."

"That's great. That's dandy."

"What's the matter, Bud?" she said, pouting. "Didn't I do it right?"

"Sure, you did fine. Only somebody shot the boss and he's in bad shape. It's probably too late."

"Oh!" She hung her head.

"If he's out, I'm going back and see what I can find in his room. That jerk behind the desk will let me in for a few bucks."

"Can I come?"

"Not this time, honey. You'll just be in the way. You go on to bed and I'll see you in the morning. It's four o'clock already."

She pouted again and walked off toward the barn. I wondered idly why none of the kids had been awakened by the shot. Then I realized that they probably had. In the night club business it turns out most times to be a good idea to stay away from places where you hear shots.

Thinking of shots reminded me that maybe I had better start running around with a gun like everybody else. I hurried up to my room and dug my .32 automatic out of my bureau drawer. I keep it under a green shirt. I seldom use the shirt and I have never used the gun. I won it in a crap game in San Diego, full clip and all.

I ran back out to the car and headed for Casling for the second time. I made good time getting in.

The clerk gave me a gentle sneer and said, "Back again, I see."

"No time for talk, sonny. Do I get a key to two eleven for ten bucks, or do we argue some more?"

He shrugged and turned his back on me. Then he turned around again and slid a key across the counter. I hauled out a ten and gave it to him. He stuck it in his pocket as though it were an old gum wrapper. "Any trouble about this, mister, and I say you snitched it while I was asleep."

I went on upstairs. Two eleven was three doors on the right from the head of the stairs. I listened for a minute outside the door. The room seemed to be dark. No light showed under the door. I slipped the key in and it worked quietly. I shut the door gently behind me and found the wall switch.

It was the world's average cheap hotel room. A scratched wooden bed, one bleary window, pink and white cotton blankets, sagging springs, holes worn in the rug, only one bulb working in the overhead light, dripping faucets in the tiny bathroom, one cane chair, a bureau with a cracked glass top, an ashtray advertising beer, a glass half full of water, and a liverish color scheme of soiled green and dusty maroon.

I tried the bureau first. Cheap clean clothes. Nothing else. I tried the closet. Cheap dirty clothes. Nothing under the mattress. I stood in the middle of the room and scratched my head. Where do the detectives look?

I was wondering what was under the rug when I heard a stealthy clicking noise at the door. I snatched the gun out of my jacket pocket and stepped into the bathroom. I didn't have time to click the light switch. I felt cold sweat jump out on my forehead. I felt slightly dizzy. I pulled the door shut a little so that I could see through the crack.

The door swung open so violently that it banged back against the wall. No one stepped in. I caught a flash of movement and tried to level the gun at it. A hand and arm reached quickly around the door and flicked toward the light switch. The room

became abruptly black. A dim light from the hall silhouetted the door.

Then something moved quickly through the shadows and was in the room with me. I wanted to yell but my mouth was too dry.

Then a husky voice said, "Okay, Morse. Toss your gun on the floor."

The sound of my own name shocked me. I stuffed the gun down into the side of my right shoe and said, "I haven't got a gun. I haven't got anything, Thomson."

There was silence for a few seconds. Then, dryly: "I believe you. That's just the kind of a sucker play you'd make. Where are you standing?"

"In the bathroom."

"Stand outside the door of the bathroom."

I did as I was told. I heard the door shut again and then the lights clicked on. I had been straining my eyes in the dark and the sudden brightness made me blink. John C. Winch stood in front of me, an efficient-looking gun leveled at my middle. He had a smile on his tan face. He stepped forward and slapped my pockets and then stepped back.

"Surprised? Now go on over and sit on the bed."

I walked over. I had to move carefully to keep the gun from dropping out of my shoe. I hoped the pants cuff covered it enough. I tucked my feet back under the hanging spread when I sat down.

"You don't have to tell me, Winch. I can tell you. I've been a dope. You and Sellers and Thomson are behind this thing. You were in a perfect position to know how much the Howler could stand to pay. Now you're greedy and you want his place. You'll buy it through some dummy and start to rake off real profits."

He smiled down at me, but the muzzle of the gun didn't waver. "You're a smart boy, Morse, but not smart enough. You should have figured all this before. Then you could have handed me some real trouble."

"One thing I can't figure. Why let me know you're in on it? You won't be safe now, because you can't scare me."

"Scare you, Bud? Who wants to scare you? I wouldn't think of scaring you."

He stood and grinned down at me. I've never seen a colder pair of eyes. I knew that he wouldn't have to scare me. I wouldn't be able to talk with one of those little lead slugs nestling in my brain. The room seemed to sway around me. I sat on the edge of the bed and let my hands hang down. I could reach the gun in my shoe without stooping over. The mouth of his gun was saying, "Don't move, brother!"

He stopped smiling and nibbled at the edge of his finger. "I wish you'd brought a gun, Morse. You make it tough."

I looked behind him and saw the doorknob move. I've never learned

how to keep expressions off my pug face. He probably knew I couldn't swing a gag, and when he saw my eyes widen and where they were looking, he backed off so that he could cover me and the door at the same time.

I watched his eyes and saw them flick over toward the door. I swooped after the gun and brought it up, pressing hard on the trigger at the same time.

"Drop your gun, chump!" I hollered.

I rolled off the bed as I brought the gun up. Nothing happened. I realized with sudden horror that an automatic won't work unless you jack a cartridge up into the chamber first by yanking on the slide. I hadn't. His gun snapped and something suddenly picked at my sleeve.

I looked up from the floor and kept pulling on the useless trigger. His cold right eye sighted down the barrel. I could look right into it. I shut my eyes, and another shot blasted in the room. I wondered if I was dead.

I opened my right eye. Winch was still looking at me, but the gun barrel had sagged a little. He was smiling. His eyes didn't look quite so cold. He leaned toward me, farther and farther and then I scrambled aside as he fell over toward me. His head crashed into my left shoulder and he bounded off. He lay on the floor with a neat hole through the top of his left ear. The hole didn't stop there. It went right on inside.

I looked up. The door was open. Thomson stood in the doorway, a gun in his hand. He looked down at me with an expression of infinite disgust. He shoved the gun into his pocket and stepped into the room. He kicked the door shut. He sat down on the wicker chair as I climbed up onto the bed again.

"You better have a cigarette, Morse. Your hand's shaking." He held out a pack and I took one.

"Hand, hell. I'm shaking all over. I'll be shaking just like this on my next birthday. I'm going to keep right on shaking for a couple of years."

"You ought to. So should every other amateur that fools around with stuff like this."

"I'm beginning to think maybe I had you wrong in all this, Thomson.."

"You sure did, and I knew you were digging around. I thought I'd let you. Thought it might stir up the big shot here." He reached his foot out and nudged Winch in the ribs. Winch seemed to be flattening out against the floor. "And the name's Burke. Jake Burke. I work for the Associated Restaurant Managers and Owners Group. I'm a trouble shooter. Sellers sent for me and I planted myself in Browne's place. You can figure the rest out. Winch, here, got greedy. He set up a shakedown racket. Then he decided he wanted Browne's place. Made the payments high. Tried to

talk Browne into selling. Got Browne in the dark to scare him. Shot him. That was a mistake."

I raised my eyebrows and he said, "Don't look puzzled. I just came from there. Browne'll be okay. Slug went right around him, under the hide, and wedged against his backbone. The doc has it out already. Give him a month and he'll be louder than ever."

"How did you know about me?"

"You! You looked at me like I had shot Lincoln. You followed me about thirty feet behind me. I could see the streetlights reflected on your headlights. I stayed at the top of the stairs and watched you and the gal talk to Jonesy down at the desk. Sellers thought you looked a little queer too. I told you this is no business for an amateur."

"If you're so smart, why didn't you pick him up quicker?"

"He was too smart, Morse. Used the telephone. Also, I couldn't step in on any of the payoffs. He had kids delivering the dough every time. Couldn't take a chance. Had to wait until he got worried about you catching onto him and about me. I don't think he had me figured, but I guess he was going to try to knock you off with my gun and me off with yours—if you had one."

There was a knock at the door. A gentle knock. Burke shouted, "Come in!"

The door opened and Jerry stepped timidly into the room. She looked down at the body of Winch, and her eyes widened. She circled widely around him and ran into my arms. She was shaking. I put my arms around her. Her hair smelled good. Burke started to laugh.

"This your girl?" he asked. I nodded. He stepped over and grabbed her wrist. He snapped something onto it and yanked her away from me. I started up with the vague idea of swinging on him. He was still laughing. She fumbled in her bag. He slapped the bag down onto the floor and a small automatic bounded out of it and balanced grotesquely between Winch's shoulderblades. She stopped struggling and hung her head.

"I told you you were an amateur. Why don't you think things out, Morse? Winch was in this with this gal. She was the plant in Browne's place. That's why I tried to date her. That's how he got on to me. She told him. And she told him about you wanting her to help follow me. That made him wonder who I could be. How did he know you were here? She waited until he came out of Browne's place and then told him. She saw his car out there. She probably waited in it. How did she get here? She probably came down with him. I figure she probably wore a man's hat and covered her face and helped him collect each month."

He tilted her chin up roughly and looked into her eyes. "I'll even

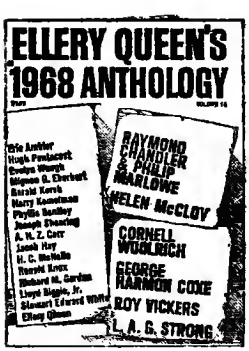
bet she figured out that gag of using kids for the payoff."

She jerked her chin away from his fingers and said, "Suppose I did?"

There was a heavy fist banging at the door and Burke said, "That'll be the cops that I told Jonesy to send for. We'll all have to go down and make out statements and stuff."

He tugged at the steel bracelet on her wrist and whispered, "Come on, honey. Let's go answer the door." Dawn made her face look yellowish.

And suddenly I realized that when I got back to the piano I was going to do a cornball job on *Melancholy Baby*. I was really going to do it up. I'd play it for the Howler.



For the best in mystery reading

ELLERY QUEEN'S
1968 ANTHOLOGY
$1.00 per copy

ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY / 505 PARK AVE. / NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022

Please send me _____ copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S 1968 ANTHOLOGY—Volume 14. I am enclosing $1.00 for each copy. EQ-10-67

Name _____
(Please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

In "The New York Times Book Review" of October 16, 1966, J. P. Bauke, professor of German at Columbia University, wrote: "Heinrich Böll is one of the most significant writers in contemporary Germany . . . Now approaching 50, Böll is generally acknowledged as the moralist among his country's novelists, the man who looks for authentic humanity in a society thriving on ersatz . . . grimly determined to expose what's foul on the banks of the Rhine . . . At his best, Böll creates satiric close-ups of unsurpassed power . . . It is a measure of Böll's insight and wisdom that his stories, despite their intensely local color, have universal application."

LIKE A BAD DREAM

by HEINRICH BÖLL

(translated by Leila Vennewitz)

THAT EVENING WE HAD INVITED the Zumpens over for dinner, nice people, and it was through my father-in-law that we had got to know them; ever since we have been married he has helped me to meet people who can be useful to me in business, and Zumpen can be useful—he is chairman of a committee which places contracts for housing projects, and I have married into the excavating business.

I was tense that evening, but Bertha, my wife, reassured me. "The fact," she said, "that he's coming at all is promising. Just try and get the conversation round to the contract. You know it's tomorrow they're going to be awarded."

I stood downstairs looking through the net curtains of the glass front door, waiting for Zumpen. I smoked, ground the cigarette butts under my foot, and shoved them under the mat.

Next I took up a position at the bathroom window and stood there wondering why Zumpen had accepted the invitation; he couldn't be that interested in having dinner with us, and the fact that the big contract I was involved in was going to be awarded tomorrow must have made the whole thing as embarrassing to him as it was to me.

I thought about the contract too: it was a big one, I would make 20,-

Copyright © 1965 by Heinrich Böll.

000 marks on the deal, and I wanted the money.

Bertha had decided what I was to wear—a dark jacket, trousers a shade lighter, and a conservative tie. That's the kind of thing she learned at home, and at boarding school from the nuns. Also what to offer guests—when to pass the cognac, and when the vermouth, how to arrange desserts; it is comforting to have a wife who knows all about such things.

But Bertha was tense too; as she put her hands on my shoulders, they touched my neck, and I felt her thumbs damp and cold against it.

"It's going to be all right," she said. "You'll get the contract."

"Christ," I said, "it means twenty thousand marks to me, and you know how we need the money."

"One should never," she said gently, "mention Christ's name in connection with money!"

A dark car drew up in front of our house, a make I didn't recognize, but it looked Italian.

"Take it easy," Bertha whispered; "wait till they've rung, let them stand there for a couple of seconds, then walk slowly to the door and open it."

I watched Mr. and Mrs. Zumpen come up the steps. He is slender and tall, with graying temples, the kind of man who fifty years ago would have been known as a "ladies' man." Mrs. Zumpen is one of those thin dark women who always make me think of lemons. I could tell from Zumpen's face that it was a frightful bore for him to have dinner with us.

Then the doorbell rang, and I waited one second, two seconds, walked slowly to the door and opened it.

"Well," I said, "how nice of you to come!"

Cognac glasses in hand, we went from room to room in our apartment, which the Zumpens wanted to see. Bertha stayed in the kitchen to squeeze some mayonnaise out of a tube onto the appetizers; she does this very nicely—hearts, loops, little houses.

The Zumpens complimented us on our apartment; they exchanged smiles when they saw the big desk in my study; at that moment it seemed a bit too big even to me. Zumpen admired a small rococo cabinet, a wedding present from my grandmother, and a baroque madonna in our bedroom.

By the time we got back to the dining room, Bertha had dinner on the table; she had done this very nicely too—it was all so attractive yet so natural, and dinner was pleasant and relaxed. We talked about movies and books, about the recent elections, and Zumpen praised the assortment of cheeses, and Mrs. Zumpen praised the coffee and the pastries. Then we showed the Zumpens our honeymoon pictures: photographs of the Breton coast, Spanish donkeys, and street scenes from Casablanca.

After that we had some more cognac, and when I stood up to get the box with the photos of the time when we were engaged, Bertha gave me a sign, and I didn't get the box. For two minutes there was absolute silence, because we had nothing more to talk about, and we all thought about the contract; I thought of the 20,000 marks, and it struck me that I could deduct the bottle of cognac from my income tax.

Zumpen looked at his watch and said, "Too bad, it's ten o'clock; we have to go. It's been such a pleasant evening!" And Mrs. Zumpen said, "It was really delightful, and I hope you'll come to us one evening."

"We would love to," Bertha said, and we stood around for another half minute, all thinking again about the contract, and I felt Zumpen was waiting for me to take him aside and bring up the subject. But I didn't. Zumpen kissed Bertha's hand, and I went ahead, opened the door, and held the car door open for Mrs. Zumpen down below.

"Why," said Bertha gently when I came in, "didn't you mention the contract to him? You know it's going to be awarded tomorrow."

"Well," I said, "I didn't know how to bring the conversation round to it."

"Now look," she said in a quiet voice, "you could have used any excuse to ask him into your study; that's where you should have talked to him. You must have noticed how interested he is in art. You ought to have said, 'I have an Eighteenth Century crucifix in there you might like to have a look at,' and then . . ."

I said nothing, and she sighed and tied on her apron. I followed her into the kitchen; we put the rest of the appetizers back in the refrigerator, and I crawled about on the floor looking for the top of the mayonnaise tube. I put away the remains of the cognac, counted the cigars—Zumpen had smoked only one; I emptied the ashtrays, ate another pastry, and looked to see if there was any coffee left in the pot.

When I went back to the kitchen, Bertha was standing there with the car key in her hand.

"What's up?" I asked.

"We have to go over there, of course," she said.

"Over where?"

"To the Zumpens'," she said. "Where do you think?"

"It's nearly half-past ten."

"I don't care if it's midnight," Bertha said, "all I know is, there's twenty thousand marks involved. Don't imagine they're squeamish."

She went into the bathroom to get ready, and I stood behind her watching her wipe her mouth and draw in new outlines, and for the first time I noticed how wide and primitive that mouth is. When she tightened the knot of my tie I could have kissed her, the way I always used to when she fixed my tie, but I didn't.

Downtown the cafés and restau-

rants were brightly lit. People were sitting outside on the terraces, and the light from the street lamps was caught in the silver ice-cream dishes and ice buckets.

Bertha gave me an encouraging look; but she stayed in the car when we stopped in front of the Zumpens' house, and I pressed the bell at once and was surprised how quickly the door was opened. Mrs. Zumpen did not seem surprised to see me; she had on some black lounging pajamas with loose full trousers embroidered with yellow flowers, and this made me think more than ever of lemons.

"I beg your pardon," I said. "I would like to speak to your husband."

"He's gone out again," she said. "He'll be back in half an hour."

In the hall I saw a lot of madonnas, Gothic and baroque, even rococo madonnas, if there is such a thing.

"I see," I said, "well then, if you don't mind I'll come back in half an hour."

Bertha had bought an evening paper; she was reading it and smoking, and when I sat down beside her she said, "I think you could have talked about it to her too."

"But how do you know he wasn't there?"

"Because I know he is at the Gaffel Club playing chess, as he does every Wednesday at this time."

"You might have told me that earlier."

"Please try and understand," said Bertha, folding the newspaper. "I am trying to help you, I want you to find out for yourself how to deal with such things. All we had to do was call up Father and he would have settled the whole thing for you with one phone call, but I want you to get the contract on your own."

"All right," I said. "Then what'll we do? Wait here half an hour, or go up right away and have a talk with her?"

"We'd better go up right away," said Bertha.

We got out of the car and went up in the elevator together.

"Life," said Bertha, "consists of making compromises and concessions."

Mrs. Zumpen was no more surprised now than she had been earlier, when I had come alone. She greeted us, and we followed her into her husband's study. Mrs. Zumpen brought some cognac, poured it out, and before I could say anything about the contract she pushed a yellow folder toward me.

"Housing Project Fir Tree Haven," I read, and looked up in alarm at Mrs. Zumpen, at Bertha, but they both smiled and Mrs. Zumpen said, "Open the folder," and I opened it. Inside was another one, pink, and on this I read, "Housing Project Fir Tree Haven—Excavation Work." I opened this too, saw my estimate lying there on top of the pile; along the upper edge someone had written in red, *Lowest bid.*

I could feel myself flushing with pleasure, my heart thumping, and I thought of the 20,000 marks.

"Christ," I said softly, and closed the file, and this time Bertha forgot to rebuke me.

"Prost," said Mrs. Zumpen with a smile, "let's drink to it then."

We drank, and I stood up and said, "It may seem rude of me, but perhaps you'll understand that I would like to go home now."

"I understand perfectly," said Mrs. Zumpen. "There's just one small item to be taken care of." She took the file, leafed through it, and said, "Your price per square meter is thirty pfennigs below that of the next-lowest bidder. I suggest you raise your price by fifteen pfennigs; that way, you'll still be the lowest and you'll have made an extra four thousand five hundred marks. Come on, do it now!"

Bertha took her pen out of her purse and offered it to me, but I was in too much of a turmoil to write. I gave the file to Bertha and watched her alter the price with a steady hand, rewrite the total, and hand the file back to Mrs. Zumpen.

"And now," said Mrs. Zumpen, "just one more little thing. Get out your check book and write a check for three thousand marks; it must be a cash check and endorsed by you."

She had said this to me, but it was Bertha who pulled our check book out of her purse and made out the check.

"It won't be covered," I said in a low voice.

"When the contract is awarded, there will be an advance, and then it will be covered," said Mrs. Zumpen.

Perhaps I failed to grasp what was happening at the time. As we went down in the elevator, Bertha said she was happy, but I said nothing.

Bertha chose a different way home. We drove through quiet residential districts. I saw lights in open windows, people sitting on balconies drinking wine; it was a clear, warm night.

"I suppose the check was for Zumpen?" was all I said, softly, and Bertha replied, just as softly, "Of course."

I looked at Bertha's small brown hands on the steering wheel, so confident and quiet. Hands, I thought, that sign checks and squeeze mayonnaise tubes, and I looked higher, at her mouth, and still felt no desire to kiss it.

That evening I did not help Bertha put the car away in the garage, nor did I help her with the dishes. I poured myself a large cognac, went up to my study, and sat down at my desk, which was much too big for me. I was wondering about something; I got up, went into the bedroom and looked at the baroque madonna, but even there I couldn't put my finger on the thing I was wondering about.

The ringing of the phone inter-

rupted my thoughts. I lifted the receiver and was not surprised to hear Zumpen's voice.

"Your wife," he said, "made a slight mistake. She raised the price by twenty-five pfennigs instead of fifteen."

I thought for a moment and then said, "That wasn't a mistake, she did it with my consent."

He was silent for a second or two, then said with a laugh, "So you had already discussed the various possibilities?"

"Yes," I said.

"All right; then make out another check of a thousand."

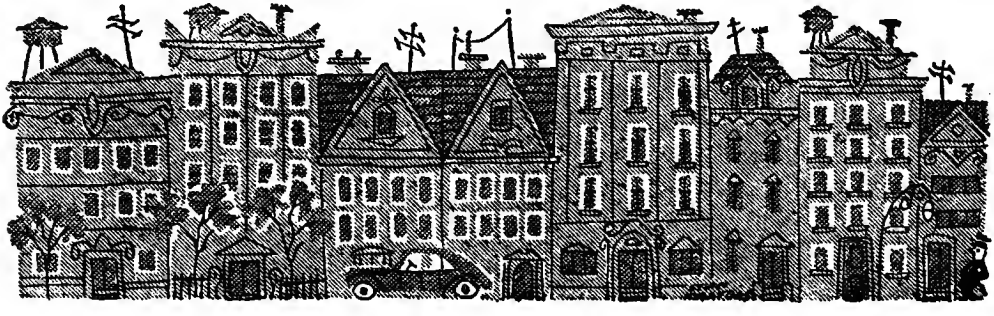
"Five hundred," I said, and I thought: It's like a bad dream—that's what it's like.

"Eight hundred," he said, and I said with a laugh, "Six hundred," and I knew, although I had no experience to go on, that he would now say seven hundred and fifty, and when he did I said, "Yes," and hung up.

It was not yet midnight when I went downstairs and over to the car to give Zumpen the check; he was alone and laughed as I reached into the car to hand him the folded check.

When I walked slowly back into the house, there was no sign of Bertha; she didn't appear when I went back into my study; she didn't appear when I went downstairs again for a glass of milk from the refrigerator, and I knew what she was thinking; she was thinking: he has to get over it, and I have to leave him alone; this is something he has to understand.

But I never did understand. It is beyond understanding.



Martin Vayne had a problem. It was a personal problem but not a unique one. In fact, many other men have had the same problem, in all parts of the world and in all ages. And like so many of those other men, Martin Vayne thought he could solve the problem safely and satisfyingly; but he should have remembered what Robert Burns wrote on the other side of the world and in a different time:

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley;
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promis'd joy."

The author ("Noel Bosker" is a pseudonym) is just past thirty, married to a builder in Palmerston, New Zealand, and has two children. Most of her time is taken up with home and family—"we live a pretty dull life here in New Zealand and travel round the country as much as possible, usually camping out." Apart from writing, she is interested in medieval history and flying—"I'd like to take up parachute jumping one day, but nobody takes me very seriously on this; I suppose because I have difficulty stepping down from a kitchen stool without spraining my ankle." She reads extensively and enjoys historical and mystery stories most.

BEST LAID SCHEMES

by NOEL BOSKER

"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, WOMAN," said Martin Vayne as he rang the doorbell for the third time, "open the door." But he was careful not to say it loudly, and he kept his carefully adjusted expression of polite inquiry just in case the woman should open the door. After all, she might not be out. She might be talking on the telephone or . . . delicately he refrained from exploring any other possibility too closely.

But the house remained silent and he finally admitted to himself that there was no one there. Which was odd—very odd—because it was scarcely more than half an hour

since the woman had called the office and asked him to come to 26 Morningside Crescent to arrange for fire coverage on her house. He took a step backward and searched for the house number. It was 26. There was no mistake.

He went back to the car and lit a cigarette. The mystery didn't interest him greatly. He had bigger things to think about, a plan to perfect; and here, for all its unexpectedness, was an opportunity to do so. He dismissed the incident with the thought that no doubt the woman would call later and explain.

He slid the car into gear with a graunching sound that set his teeth on edge, for although he drove it regularly in the course of his employment with the Southern Districts Insurance Company, he had never become used to the scatty way in which it reacted to his control. He much preferred his own car, but that was understandable. It was long and low and bronze-colored and very expensive, and it craved gasoline the way an alcoholic craved whiskey.

Fiona had given him the car as a birthday present, without realizing that Martin himself had planted the idea in her gratifyingly receptive mind. One of the nice things about Fiona was her simplicity. The other, of course, was her money. It helped to compensate for the fact that she was the dumbest woman he had ever met. If he had been honest with himself he would have admitted she had to be dumb to have married him; but honesty was not one of the virtues he ever claimed for himself.

He drove slowly, oblivious of the traffic that eddied around him. His mind, previously clouded with Fire Claims and Accident Reports, was now clear and alert. On an impulse he left the main road and turned down the side road that led to the beach. It was too good a day to spend sitting in the office and he wouldn't be missed for an hour or two. He found a place near the dunes and parked. There was nobody in sight. Here he could be alone with his thoughts—and his plan.

Catching sight of his reflection in the rear-view mirror he allowed himself a brief self-satisfied smile. It was not a handsome face, but its economy of line and unextravagant features pleased him. It fitted the picture he had of himself—clear-headed, detached, unemotional.

That his assessment was not absolutely accurate was proved by a girl named Laureen.

He hadn't intended to become involved with her—really involved. There had been other women, other affairs that had burned fiercely for a time and been forgotten as easily as they had been ignited. It should have been that way with Laureen, but something had happened—he wasn't sure what—and he had forgotten all his rules about not becoming emotionally involved.

He had met her at the office

Christmas party five months before. It had been the usual dreary get-together that he would willingly have foregone except that both Fiona and the General Manager expected him to attend. Fiona had consumed her customary quota of sweet sherry and retired to a corner with the Chief Clerk's wife to giggle and gossip for the rest of the evening. Martin was standing at the bar when he realized that he was being watched openly and amusedly by a girl in her early twenties.

He recognized her as having come with one of the junior inspectors, and his first impression was of both coolness and radiance. The radiance was her hair: it was long and auburn and glowing, and she wore it drawn severely back from her face. Her face was the coolness—cool and beautiful and mocking. He was hardly aware that he was gaping at her.

She moved along the bar and sat on the stool next to him. Her dress was low-cut, a rich emerald green, and she moved in an aura of some faint but tantalizing fragrance.

"Are you satisfied?" she asked.

He blinked at her owlishly. "I beg your pardon?"

She smiled. "You've been staring at me for some time. I wondered if you liked what you saw."

He was about to apologize when he caught a glimpse of Fiona, her face flushed and vacant, her hair disarranged and clinging damply to her head. The contrast was so great that he felt a sudden yearning for something soft and feminine to reassure him that womanhood was not synonymous with the woman he had married. Suddenly he felt cool and virile and quite equal to the challenge being offered to him.

"I think you're beautiful," he said softly, and his eyes caressed her gently.

She accepted his homage without embarrassment.

"You can buy me a drink," she said.

And that was the beginning of it.

He hadn't intended to let it go beyond the stage of a casual affair, something brief and passionate to be savored and then, regretfully, ended. But this time it didn't work, and soon he realized that he had passed the point where he could turn his back dispassionately on Laureen and return to his old life with Fiona.

Fiona had to go.

As soon as the thought occurred to him he wondered why he hadn't considered it before. But until Laureen came into his life, there had been no reason to regard Fiona as an obstacle. So long as she was prepared to go on spending her money, her lovely unlimited money left to her by her first husband, there was no need to involve himself in the sordid contemplation of murder. But now it was necessary. More than that; it was vital.

With Fiona dead he would have all the money he needed to make

Laureen happy. That is, if it weren't for Ed.

Under the terms of Fiona's will Martin was to inherit a legacy of £10,000 and an income for life from the balance of the estate. A larger legacy went to her brother Ed, and on Martin's death the remainder of the estate became Ed's outright. This, as Fiona had carefully explained so that he wouldn't feel hurt, was to keep the bulk of the estate in the family.

"It would be different if we had children, dear," she said. "But we haven't, so it's best that Ed should get it if anything happened to you, because after you he's all the family I've got. But I'm not going to die for ages, and neither are you, so it doesn't really matter, does it?"

"No," Martin agreed, suppressing with difficulty the thought that one day Ed—big stupid useless Ed—would have his hands on scads of money that rightfully belonged to Martin Vayne. "No, dear, it doesn't really matter."

But it did matter. So Ed had to go, too.

The plan was simple.

Ed would murder Fiona.

Or, at least, the police would think so, and that amounted to the same thing. Ed would hang for it, and with Ed out of the way Martin would inherit everything.

It was simple enough to devise a plan that would incriminate his brother-in-law. Ed had been out of work for months and was quite content to live on the handouts that Fiona gave him. Most of the day he spent loafing around the house, with occasional visits to the bowling alley or neighborhood bar as the mood seized him. He was not ambitious, and as long as he had enough money to indulge his weaknesses, he was amiable enough. In fact, his very amiability nearly drove Martin insane. It would be a pleasure to dispose of Ed.

The murder would take place while Martin was at work. It was relatively easy for him to arrange an alibi, since all the time he would need was twenty minutes—seven minutes to and from the house, and six minutes to kill Fiona and plant enough evidence to incriminate Ed.

All he needed was a motive that pointed straight to his brother-in-law, and as luck would have it, Fiona herself provided it for him.

Periodically even she revolted against Ed's lack of ambition. On this occasion he came home drunker than usual while they were entertaining friends to dinner. Amiable when sober, Ed took fiendish delight in taunting his sister when he was drunk. Usually she took it calmly, knowing that sobriety would bring repentance and that a cash advance would return him to her fold until the next lapse.

But there were other occasions, which lately had become more frequent, when she would turn on him and scream and rave and threaten reprisals if he didn't mend his ways.

This had been one of those occasions, and although she controlled herself sufficiently not to scream at him, her threats had been earnest and deadly.

"You can get out tomorrow," she said vehemently. "Out of here and out of my life. I'm sick of you. You've had the last of my money that you'll ever get."

Ed laughed. "That's my Fi," he hiccupped. "Let go with both barrels. You'll feel better."

"I'll see my lawyer in the morning," Fiona threatened. "I'll cut you out of my will."

It was at this stage that Martin had felt it expedient to play the peacemaker. The point had been made and well taken by everyone present, and there was nothing to be gained by letting the scene degenerate to the stage where both Ed and Fiona would dissolve into tears, as they invariably did. He needed the dinner guests as witnesses later, so it was better if they did not realize that this scene was played out with painstaking faithfulness at least once every month. So he shepherded his brother-in-law out of the room and left his wife, pale and breathless, to cope with the remains of their dinner party.

The quarrel had taken place the previous evening, and now that the stage was set, the plan must be put into operation as soon as possible. If Ed followed his normal pattern, and Martin felt sure he would, then he would spend the next twenty-four hours sobering up and repenting to the point at which he was able to face Fiona again. After the row the night before he had left the house, and was now no doubt holed up in some sleazy little bar drinking ginger ale and unburdening himself to the unfortunate barmaid. His reappearance at the house could reasonably be expected to take place late that afternoon.

But Fiona would die at 3:30.

Martin's alibi was good, but not perfect. There was no need for a perfect alibi because the police wouldn't be looking further than Ed for their man. And perfect alibis were always suspect.

With a start he looked at his watch and saw that it was almost 11:45. There was no point in going back to the office for such a short time before lunch, he decided as he eased out into the stream of traffic on the main road. However, pride drew him to the firm's parking lot to get his own car. If he had a weakness, and he wasn't prepared to admit that he had, it was this snazzy car. It seemed to stand for all he had ever wanted, and all he might yet have. His pride in owning it had not diminished since the day Fiona had handed him the keys and whispered coyly, "It's yours, darling." Everywhere he went in it he was conscious of the envious looks which followed him, and with Laureen at his side he'd be a king.

Laureen, he thought, this is all for

you. So wish me luck, darling.

And she had, of course, this morning when he had slipped into a phone booth and called to tell her that this was to be the day. Soon he would be calling to tell her that it was all over, that he was free.

He parked the car in the garage and entered the house.

Fiona wasn't in the living room. He found her in their bedroom. She was dead.

At first he couldn't believe it. But the blood and the startled vacancy of her open eyes allowed no disbelief. Nor did the police inspector who came into the room and greeted him. Vaguely Martin was aware that Ed had followed the Inspector in.

"Are you Martin Vayne?" the Inspector asked, but not gently as one would expect of someone addressing a bereaved husband.

Martin nodded dumbly.

"Your wife has been murdered," the Inspector said.

Words formed in Martin's brain. Phrases like "My God, it can't be true!"—but his tongue seemed glued to the top of his mouth and all he could do was keep on nodding.

"Is this yours?" the Inspector asked, indicating Martin's ivory-handled letter opener.

Martin nodded more vigorously, and feeling that it was time he said something, he croaked, "Is that what was used?"

The Inspector looked at him oddly. "Seems like it," he said noncommittally.

"My God," said Martin, "it's horrible."

He meant it, too. In his plan he had intended to strangle Fiona barehanded. That was a method that would appeal to Ed, primitive Ed, with his huge hairy hands and massive arms that could bend an iron bar or tear a telephone directory in two. But if he, Martin, had been committing the murder on his own account—putting his signature to it, as it were—the letter opener, so precise and deadly, was just the weapon he would have chosen.

"There are some questions I would like to ask you, Mr. Vayne. If you don't mind . . ."

"Of course." Martin hastily reassembled his wits. Somewhere in his brain he had filed a whole set of reactions and replies to be used when he was interviewed by the police, but he hadn't expected to use them so soon. He wasn't even sure they were going to fit the questions any more. Like this first one.

"Where were you this morning between ten and eleven thirty?"

"I've been at work since nine."

"You work for the Southern Districts Insurance Company?"

"Yes."

"And you've been at the office all morning?"

A finger of fear that had been hovering just beyond his awareness settled lightly, and Martin was suddenly afraid.

"No," he said. "I was out, calling on a client."

"Where?"

"Bedley. Twenty-six Morningside Crescent."

"Then your client will be able to confirm that."

Martin tried to preserve his calm, but it was difficult with fear fighting madly for possession of his mind, and the Inspector making little attempt to conceal his hostility. And Ed, now sitting on Fiona's vanity stool, kept smiling at Martin from behind a mask of simulated grief.

"I'm afraid," said Martin, trying to inject just the right note of regret into his tone, "that won't be possible. There was nobody home, unfortunately."

The Inspector raised his eyebrows. "You spent nearly two hours calling on someone who wasn't home?"

Martin swallowed convulsively. "I—I wasn't feeling too well, so I drove down to the beach and parked there for a while."

"Did anyone see you?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. I didn't notice anyone."

"But they might have noticed your car. It's an unusual one for an insurance salesman."

Martin rejected the straw, even as it was offered. "I was driving the company car," he said. "Someone might have noticed it. It's a green sedan."

"Have you any idea how many green sedans there are in this city, Mr. Vayne?"

Martin shook his head. "Hundreds, I suppose."

"But not many cars like yours, would you say? Bronze-colored and sporty."

"I haven't seen any others just like mine."

"Then would it surprise you to know that your car—*your* car, Mr. Vayne—was seen at ten thirty this morning, parked half a block from here?"

Anger and frustration welled up in Martin.

"It couldn't have been," he shouted. "It was parked in the office lot—it's been there all morning."

The Inspector sighed. It was as if Martin's anger was a signal he'd been waiting for.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Vayne," he said in a voice completely devoid of regret. "I'd like you to come down to the station and answer some more questions. And I must warn you that anything you say will be taken down and may be used in evidence against you."

It was too much. Martin turned on Ed, still sitting on the vanity stool, his silent laughter filling the room.

"Why don't you ask *him* a few questions? Ask him where *he* was this morning. *He's* got more motive than I have."

"Don't worry, Mr. Vayne. We're quite satisfied with what Mr. Cartley has told us. He was with his

fiancée until he came home and found his sister's body half an hour ago. Medical evidence indicates that she died between ten and eleven. Of course, we'll question his young lady."

"I was with her," said Ed softly. "You ask her. She'll tell you."

"Liar!" yelled Martin. "Murdering liar! You aren't engaged, you hopeless bum! You couldn't get a woman to look at you, let alone marry you!"

"Oh, yes, I'm engaged," said Ed. "We got engaged last night. We were celebrating, that's why I didn't come home. You know how it is. Anyway, you ask her. You might even know her. Her name's Laureen."

NEXT MONTH . . .

a *BRAND-NEW* Nicky Welt *short novel*—complete!

by the author of FRIDAY THE RABBI SLEPT LATE

and SATURDAY THE RABBI WENT HUNGRY

HARRY KEMELMAN's *Man on a Ladder*

Junichiro Tanizaki was born in 1886 in Tokyo, and eventually attended Tokyo Imperial University where he studied Japanese literature. His earliest published work, a one-act play, appeared in 1909, but it was many years before the first of his novels was translated and published in English—SOME PREFER NETTLES *(1955), followed by* THE MAKIOKA SISTERS *and* THE KEY. *Ivan Morris has written in the New York "Herald Tribune": "If any Japanese writer is awarded the Nobel Prize in the next few years, it will be, in all likelihood, Tanizaki."*

We are grateful to Jay H. Long of the American Embassy, Bangkok, Thailand, for calling Tanizaki's "The Thief" to our attention. Mr. Long informed us that this "highly modern psychological story" was written in 1921, and first published in English in 1963 . . .

THE THIEF

by JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI

IT WAS YEARS AGO, AT THE SCHOOL where I was preparing for Tokyo Imperial University.

My dormitory roommates and I used to spend a lot of time at what we called "candlelight study" (there was very little studying to it), and one night, long after lights-out, the four of us were doing just that, huddled around a candle talking on and on.

I recall that we were having one of our confused, heated arguments about love—a problem of great concern to us in those days. Then, by a natural course of development, the conversation turned to the subject of crime: we found ourselves talking about such things as swindling, theft, and murder.

"Of all crimes, the one we're most likely to commit is murder." It was Higuchi, the son of a well-known professor, who declared this. "But I don't believe I'd ever steal—I just couldn't do it. I think I could be friends with any other kind of person, but a thief seems to belong to a different species." A shadow of distaste darkened his handsome features. Somehow that frown emphasized his good looks.

"I hear there's been a rash of stealing in the dormitory lately." This time it was Hirata who spoke. "Isn't that so?" he asked, turning

Reprinted from "Seven Japanese Tales" by Junichiro Tanizaki; © Copyright 1963 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and Martin Secker & Warburg Limited.

to Nakamura, our other roommate.

"Yes, and they say it's one of the students."

"How do they know?" I asked.

"Well, I haven't heard all the details—" Nakamura dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. "But it's happened so often it must be an inside job."

"Not only that," Higuchi put in, "one of the fellows in the north wing was just going into his room the other day when somebody pushed the door open from the inside, caught him with a hard slap in the face, and ran away down the hall. He chased after him, but by the time he got to the bottom of the stairs the other one was out of sight. Back in his room, he found his trunk and bookshelves in a mess, proving it was the thief."

"Did he see his face?"

"No, it all happened too fast, but he says he looked like one of us, the way he was dressed. Apparently he ran down the hall with his coat pulled up over his head—the one thing sure is that his coat had a wisteria crest."

"A wisteria crest?" said Hirata. "You can't prove anything by that." Maybe it was only my imagination, but I thought he flashed a suspicious look at me. At the same moment I felt that I instinctively made a wry face, since my own family crest is a wisteria design. It was only by chance that I wasn't wearing my crested coat that night.

"If he's one of us it won't be easy to catch him. Nobody wants to believe there's a thief among us." I was trying to get over my embarrassment because of that moment of weakness.

"No, they'll get him in a couple of days," Higuchi said emphatically. His eyes were sparkling. "This is a secret, but they say he usually steals things in the dressing room of the bathhouse, and for two or three days now the proctors have been keeping watch. They hide overhead and look down through a little hole."

"Oh? Who told you that?" Nakamura asked.

"One of the proctors. But don't go around talking about it."

"If *you* know so much, the thief probably knows it too!" said Hirata, looking disgusted.

Here I must explain that Hirata and I were not on very good terms. In fact, by that time we barely tolerated each other. I say "we," but it was Hirata who had taken a strong dislike to me. According to a friend of mine, he once remarked scornfully that I wasn't what everyone seemed to think I was, that he'd had a chance to see through me. And again: "I'm sick of him. He'll never be a friend of mine. It's only out of pity that I have anything to do with him."

He only said such things behind my back; I never heard them from him directly, though it was obvious that he loathed me. But it wasn't in my nature to demand an expla-

nation. "If there's something wrong with me he ought to say so," I told myself. "If he doesn't have the kindness to tell me what it is, or if he thinks I'm not worth bothering with, then I won't think of *him* as a friend either." I felt a little lonely when I thought of his contempt for me, but I didn't really worry about it.

Hirata had an admirable physique and was the very type of masculinity that our school prides itself on, while I was skinny and pale and high-strung. There was something basically incompatible about us: I had to resign myself to the fact that we lived in separate worlds. Furthermore, Hirata was a judo expert of high rank, and displayed his muscles as if to say, "Watch out, or I'll give you a thrashing!"

Perhaps it seemed cowardly of me to take such a meek attitude toward him, and no doubt I *was* afraid of his physical strength; but fortunately I was quite indifferent to matters of trivial pride or prestige. "I don't care how contemptuous the other fellow is; as long as I can go on believing in myself I don't need to feel bitter toward him." That was how I made up my mind, and so I was able to match Hirata's arrogance with my own cool magnanimity. I even told one of the other boys, "I can't help it if Hirata doesn't understand me, but I appreciate his good points anyway." And I actually believed it. I never considered myself a coward. I was even rather conceited, thinking I must be a person of noble character to be able to praise Hirata from the bottom of my heart.

"A wisteria crest?" That night, when Hirata cast his sudden glance at me, the malicious look in his eyes set my nerves on edge. What could that look possibly mean? Did he know that my family crest was wisteria? Or did I take it that way simply because of my own private feelings? If Hirata suspected *me,* how was I to handle the situation? Perhaps I should laugh good-naturedly and say, "Then I'm under suspicion too, because I have the same crest." If the others laughed along with me, I'd be all right. But suppose one of them, say Hirata, only began looking grimmer and grimmer—what then? When I visualized that scene I couldn't very well speak out impulsively.

It sounds foolish to worry about such a thing, but during that brief silence all sorts of thoughts raced through my mind. "In this kind of situation what difference is there, really, between an innocent man and an actual criminal?" By then I felt that I was experiencing a criminal's anxiety and isolation. Until a moment ago I had been one of their friends, one of the élite of our famous school. But now, if only in my own mind, I was an outcast. It was absurd, but I suffered from my inability to confide in

them. I was uneasy about Hirata's slightest mood—Hirata who was supposed to be my equal.

"A thief seems to belong to a different species." Higuchi had probably said this casually enough, but now his words echoed ominously in my mind.

"A thief belongs to a different species . . ." A thief! What a detestable name to be called! I suppose what makes a thief different from other men is not so much his criminal act itself as his effort to hide it at all costs, the strain of trying to put it out of his mind, the dark fears that he can never confess. And now I was becoming enshrouded by that darkness. I was trying not to believe that I was under suspicion; I was worrying about fears that I could not admit to my closest friend. Of course it must have been because Higuchi trusted me that he told us what he'd heard from the proctor. "Don't go around talking about it," he had said, and I was glad. But why should I feel glad? After all, Higuchi has never suspected me. Somehow I began to wonder about his motive for telling us.

It also struck me that if even the most virtuous person has criminal tendencies, maybe I wasn't the only one who imagined the possibility of being a thief. Maybe the others were experiencing a little of the same discomfort. If so, then Higuchi, who had been singled out by the proctor to share his secret, must have felt very proud. Among the four of us it was he who was most trusted, he who was thought least likely to belong to that "other species." And if he won that trust because he came from a wealthy family and was the son of a famous professor, then I could hardly avoid envying him. Just as his social status improved his moral character, so my own background—I was acutely conscious of being a scholarship student, the son of a poor farmer—debased mine. For me to feel a kind of awe in his presence had nothing to do with whether or not I was a thief. We *did* belong to different species. I felt that the more he trusted me, with his frank, open attitude, the more the gulf between us deepened. The more friendly we tried to be, joking with each other in apparent intimacy, gossiping and laughing together, the more the distance between us increased. There was nothing I could do about it.

For a long time afterward I worried about whether or not I ought to wear that coat of mine with the "wisteria crest." Perhaps if I wore it around nonchalantly no one would pay any attention. But suppose they looked at me as much as to say, "Ah, he's wearing it!" Some would suspect me, or try to suppress their doubts of me, or feel sorry for me because I was under suspicion. If I became embarrassed and uneasy not only with Hirata and Higuchi but with all the students, and if I

then felt obliged to put my coat away, that would seem even more sinister.

What I dreaded was not the bare fact of being suspect, but all the unpleasant emotions that would be stirred up in others. If I were to cause doubt in other people's minds I would create a barrier between myself and those who had always been my friends. Even theft itself was not as ugly as the suspicions that would be aroused by it. No one would want to think of me as a thief: as long as it hadn't been proved, they'd want to go on associating with me as freely as ever, forcing themselves to trust me. Otherwise, what would friendship mean? Thief or not, I might be guilty of a worse sin than stealing from a friend—the sin of spoiling a friendship. Sowing seeds of doubt about myself was criminal. It *was* worse than stealing.

If I were a prudent, clever thief—no, I mustn't put it that way—if I were a thief with the least bit of conscience and consideration for other people, I'd try to keep my friendships untarnished, try to be open with my friends, treat them with a sincerity and warmth that I need never be ashamed of, while carrying out my thefts in secrecy. Perhaps I'd be what people call "a brazen thief," but if you look at it from the thief's point of view, it's the most honest attitude to take. "It's true that I steal, but it's equally true that I value my friends," such a man would say. "That is typical of a thief, that's why he belongs to a different species." Anyhow, when I started thinking that way, I couldn't help becoming more and more aware of the distance between me and my friends. Before I knew it I felt like a full-fledged thief.

One day I mustered up my courage and wore the crested coat on the school grounds. I happened to meet Nakamura, and we began walking along together.

"By the way," I remarked, "I hear they haven't caught the thief yet."

"That's right," Nakamura answered, looking away.

"Why not? Couldn't they trap him at the bathhouse?"

"He didn't show up there again, but you still hear about lots of things being stolen in other places. They say the proctors called Higuchi in the other day and gave him the devil for letting their plan leak out."

"Higuchi?" I felt the color drain from my face.

"Yes . . ." He sighed painfully, and a tear rolled down his cheek. "You've got to forgive me! I've kept it from you till now, but I think you ought to know the truth. You won't like this, but you're the one the proctors suspect. I hate to talk about it—I've never suspected you for a minute. I believe in you. And because I believe in you, I just had to tell you. I hope you won't hold it against me."

"Thanks for telling me. I'm

grateful to you." I was almost in tears myself, but at the same time I thought: "It's come at last!" As much as I dreaded it, I'd been expecting this day to arrive.

"Let's drop the subject," said Nakamura, to comfort me. "I feel better now that I've told you."

"But we can't put it out of our minds just because we hate to talk about it. I appreciate your kindness, but I'm not the only one who's been humiliated—I've brought shame on you too, as my friend. The mere fact that I'm under suspicion makes me unworthy of friendship. Any way you look at it, my reputation is ruined. Isn't that so? I imagine you'll turn your back on me too."

"I swear I never will—and I don't think you've brought any shame on me." Nakamura seemed alarmed by my reproachful tone. "Neither does Higuchi. They say he did his best to defend you in front of the proctors. He told them he'd doubt himself before he doubted you."

"But they still suspect me, don't they? There's no use trying to spare my feelings. Tell me everything you know. I'd rather have it that way."

Then Nakamura hesitantly explained. "Well, it seems the proctors get all kinds of tips. Ever since Higuchi talked too much that night there haven't been any more thefts at the bathhouse, and that's why they suspect you."

"But I wasn't the only one who heard him!"—I didn't say this, but the thought occurred to me immediately. It made me feel even more lonely and wretched.

"But how did they know Higuchi told us? There were only the four of us that night, so if nobody else knew it, and if you and Higuchi trust me—"

"You'll have to draw your own conclusions," Nakamura said, with an imploring look. "You know who it is. He's misjudged you, but I don't want to criticize him."

A sudden chill came over me. I felt as if Hirata's eyes were glaring into mine.

"Did you talk to him about me?"

"Yes . . . But I hope you realize that it isn't easy, since I'm his friend as well as yours. In fact, Higuchi and I had a long argument with him last night, and he says he's leaving the dormitory. So I have to lose one friend on account of another."

I took Nakamura's hand and gripped it hard. "I'm grateful for friends like you and Higuchi," I said, tears streaming from my eyes. Nakamura cried too. For the first time in my life I felt that I was really experiencing the warmth of human compassion. This was what I had been searching for while I was tormented by my sense of helpless isolation. No matter how vicious a thief I might be, I could never steal anything from Nakamura.

After a while I said, "To tell you the truth, I'm not worth the trouble I'm causing you. I can't stand by in silence and see you two lose such a

good friend because of me. Even though he doesn't trust me, I still respect him. He's a far better man than I am. I recognize his value as well as anyone. So why don't I move out instead, if it's come to that? Please—let *me* go, and you three can keep on living together. Even if I'm alone I'll feel better about it."

"But there's no reason for you to leave," said Nakamura, his voice charged with emotion. "I recognize his good points too, but you're the one that's being persecuted. I won't side with him when it's so unfair. If *you* leave, *we* ought to leave too. You know how stubborn he is—once he's made up his mind to go he's not apt to change it. Why not let him do as he pleases? We might as well wait for him to come to his senses and apologize. That shouldn't take very long anyway."

"But he'll never come back to apologize. He'll go on hating me forever."

Nakamura seemed to assume that I felt resentful toward Hirata. "Oh, I don't think so," he said quickly. "He'll stick to his word—that's both his strength and his weakness—but once he knows he's wrong he'll come and apologize, and make a clean breast of it. That's one of the likable things about him."

"It would be fine if he did," I said thoughtfully. "He may come back to you, but I don't believe he'll ever make friends with me again . . . But you're right, he's really likable. I only wish he liked me too."

Nakamura put his hand on my shoulder as if to protect his poor friend, as we plodded listlessly along on the grass. It was evening and a light mist hung over the school grounds; we seemed to be on an island surrounded by endless gray seas. Now and then a few students walking the other way would glance at me and go on. They already know, I thought; they're ostracizing me. I felt an overwhelming loneliness.

That night Hirata seemed to have changed his mind; he showed no intention of moving. But he refused to speak to us—even to Higuchi and Nakamura. Yet for me to leave at this stage was impossible, I decided. Not only would I be disregarding the kindness of my friends, I would be making myself seem all the more guilty. I ought to wait a little longer.

"Don't worry," my two friends were forever telling me. "As soon as they catch him the whole business will clear up." But even after another week had gone by, the criminal was still at large and the thefts were as frequent as ever. At last even Nakamura and Higuchi lost some money and a few books.

"Well, you two finally got it, didn't you? But I have a feeling the rest of us won't be touched." I remember Hirata's taunting look as he made this sarcastic remark.

After supper Nakamura and Higuchi usually went to the library, and Hirata and I were left to con-

front each other. I found this so uncomfortable that I began spending my evenings away from the dormitory too, either going to the library or taking long walks. One night around nine thirty I came back from a walk and looked into our study. Oddly enough, Hirata wasn't there, nor did the others seem to be back yet. I went to look in our bedroom, but it was empty too. Then I went back to the study and over to Hirata's desk.

Quietly I opened his drawer and ferreted out the registered letter that had come to him from his home a few days ago. Inside the letter were three ten-yen money orders, one of which I leisurely removed and put in my pocket. I pushed the drawer shut again and sauntered out into the hall. Then I went down to the yard, cut across the tennis court, and headed for the dark weedy hollow where I always buried the things I stole. But at that moment someone yelled, "Thief!" and flew at me from behind, knocking me down with a blow to my head. It was Hirata.

"Come on, let's have it! Let's see what you stuck in your pocket!"

"All right, all right, you don't have to shout like that," I answered calmly, smiling at him. "I admit I stole your money order. If you ask for it I'll give it back to you, and if you tell me to come with you I'll go anywhere you say. So we understand each other, don't we? What more do you want?"

Hirata seemed to hesitate, but soon began furiously raining blows on my face. Somehow the pain was not wholly unpleasant. I felt suddenly relieved of the staggering burden I had been carrying.

"There's no use beating me up like this, when I fell right into your trap. I made that mistake because you were so sure of yourself—I thought: 'Why the devil can't I steal from *him?*' But now you've found me out, so that's all there is to it. Later on we'll laugh about it together."

I tried to shake Hirata's hand good-naturedly, but he grabbed me by the collar and dragged me off toward our room. That was the only time Hirata seemed contemptible in my eyes.

"Hey, you fellows, I've caught the thief! You can't say I was taken in by him!" Hirata swaggered into our room and shoved me down in front of Nakamura and Higuchi, who were back from the library. Hearing the commotion, the other boys in the dormitory came swarming around our doorway.

"Hirata's right!" I told my two friends, picking myself up from the floor. "I'm the thief." I tried to speak in my normal tone, as casually as ever, but I realized that my face had gone pale.

"I suppose you hate me," I said to them. "Or else you're ashamed of me . . . You're both honest, but you're certainly gullible. Haven't I been telling you the truth over and

over again? I even said, 'I'm not the person you think I am. Hirata's the man to trust. He'll never be taken in.' But you didn't understand. I told you, 'Even if you become friendly with Hirata again, he'll never make friends with *me!*' I went as far as to say, 'I know better than anyone what a fine fellow Hirata is!' Isn't that so? I've never lied to you, have I?

"You may ask why I didn't come out and tell you the whole truth. You probably think I was deceiving you after all. But try looking at it from my position. I'm sorry, but stealing is one thing I can't control. Still, I didn't like to deceive you, so I told you the truth in a roundabout way. I couldn't be any more honest than that—it's your fault for not taking my hints. Maybe you think I'm just being perverse, but I've never been more serious. You'll probably ask why I don't quit stealing, if I'm so anxious to be honest. But that's not a fair question. You see, I was born a thief. I tried to be as sincere as I could with you under the circumstances. There was nothing else I could do. Even then my conscience bothered me—didn't I ask you to let *me* move out, instead of Hirata? I wasn't trying to fool you, I really wanted to do it for your sake. It's true that I stole from you, but it's also true that I'm your friend. I appeal to your friendship: I want you to understand that even a thief has feelings."

Nakamura and Higuchi stood there in silence, blinking with astonishment.

"Well, I can see you think I've got a lot of nerve. You just don't understand me. I guess it can't be helped, since you're of a different species." I smiled to conceal my bitterness, and added, "But since I'm your friend I'll warn you that this isn't the last time a thing like this will happen. So be on your guard! You two made friends with a thief because of your gullibility. You're likely to run into trouble when you go out in the world. Maybe you get better grades in school, but Hirata is a better man. You can't fool Hirata!"

When I singled him out for praise, Hirata made a wry face and looked away. At that moment he seemed strangely ill at ease.

Many years have passed since then. I became a professional thief and have been often behind bars; yet I cannot forget those memories —especially my memories of Hirata. Whenever I am about to commit a crime I see his face before me. I see him swaggering about as haughtily as ever, sneering at me: "Just as I suspected!"

Yes, he was a man of character with great promise. But the world is mysterious. My prediction that the naive Higuchi would "run into trouble" was wrong: partly through his father's influence, he has had a brilliant career—traveling abroad, earning a doctoral degree,

and today holding a high position in the Ministry of Railways. Meanwhile nobody knows what has become of Hirata. It's no wonder we think life is unpredictable.

I assure my reader that this account is true. I have not written a single dishonest word here. And, as I hoped Nakamura and Higuchi would, I hope you will believe that delicate moral scruples can exist in the heart of a thief like me.

But perhaps you won't believe me either. Unless of course (if I may be pardoned for suggesting it) you happen to belong to my own species.

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVER

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	DUE DATE
Bagby, George	CORPSE CANDLE	Doubleday & Co.	$3.95	9/22
Baxt, George	A PARADE OF COCKEYED CREATURES or DID SOMEONE MURDER OUR WANDERING BOY?	Random House	4.50	9/14
Chaber, M. E.	A MAN IN THE MIDDLE	Holt, Rinehart & Winston	3.95	8/28
Christie, Agatha	THIRD GIRL	Dodd, Mead & Co.	4.50	9/5
Creasey, John	THE DISSEMBLERS	Chas. Scribner's Sons	3.95	9/8
Creasey, John	THE TOFF GOES TO MARKET	Walker & Co.	3.95	9/18
Creasey, John	THE DROUGHT	Walker & Co.	3.95	8/28
Ellery Queen's	POETIC JUSTICE	N.A.L.	7.95	9/67
Gates, Natalie	HUSH, HUSH JOHNSON	Holt, Rinehart & Winston	3.95	9/21
Grierson, Edward	A CRIME OF ONE'S OWN	G. P. Putnam's	3.95	9/18
Gruber, Frank	THE PULP JUNGLE	Sherbourne Press	3.95	9/27
Hastings, Macdonald	CORK ON LOCATION	Walker & Co.	3.95	9/15
King, Louise W.	THE ROCHEMER HAG	Doubleday & Co.	3.95	9/8
Lathen, Emma	MURDER AGAINST THE GRAIN	Macmillan	4.50	9/5
Linington, Elizabeth	SOMETHING WRONG	Harper & Row	4.95	9/13
Raab, Selwyn	JUSTICE IN THE BACK ROOM	World Publishing Co.	6.95	8/3
Rathbone, Julian	DIAMONDS BID	Walker & Company	3.95	9/8
Ross, Thomas	CAST A YELLOW SHADOW	Wm. Morrow	4.50	9/20
Selmark, George	THE BRIDE THAT GOT AWAY	Doubleday	3.95	9/22
York, Andrew	THE CO-ORDINATOR	J. B. Lippincott	4.50	9/11

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE PAPERCACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	DUE DATE
Eberhart, Mignon G.	ANOTHER MAN'S MURDER	Popular Library	.60	9/5
Forrester, Larry	A GIRL CALLED FATHOM	Gold Medal (Orig.)	.50	8/31

Titles and Data Supplied by the Publishers

Alberto Moravia was born in Rome in 1907. He had little formal education beyond grammar school. At 16 he contracted tuberculosis and spent two years in a sanitarium where he learned French and English and began to write. In his twenties he was already an established and successful novelist.

Among his best-known books are TWO WOMEN, THE TIME OF INDIFFERENCE, A WOMAN OF ROME, THE FETISH, ROMAN TALES, *and more recently, a collection of essays and criticism,* MAN AS AN END. *In May 1964 he was elected an Honorary Member of The National Academy of Arts and Letters and The National Institute of Arts and Letters.*

"Only the Death of a Man" is the story of a secret and a man's conscience. It illustrates how Alberto Moravia takes a simple, well-known situation and reveals the third dimension—the dimension not visible to the eye but always there, always in secret control . . . The story was translated by Hélène Cantarella.

ONLY THE DEATH OF A MAN

by ALBERTO MORAVIA

DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT SECRETS! I had one—and it was the kind that weighs on your conscience like a nightmare.

I am a truck driver. One beautiful spring morning, while hauling a load of lava rock from a quarry near Campagnano to Rome, I ran square into a man who was coming in the opposite direction on a motor bike. It was right at the 25 Kilometer marker on the old Cassia road. Through no fault of his, either. I had kept going on the wrong side of the road long after having passed a car, and I was speeding; he was on the right, where he belonged, and going slow.

The truck hit him so hard that I barely had time to see something black fly through the blue air and then fall and lie still and black against the soft whiteness of a daisy field. The motor bike lay on the other side of the road, its wheels in the air, like a dead bug.

Lowering my head, I stepped down hard on the gas. I tore down the road to Rome and dropped my load at the yard.

Copyright 1959 by Alberto Moravia; originally titled "The Secret."

The next day the papers carried the news: So-and-so, 43 years old, a jobber by trade, leaving a wife and several children, had been run down at Kilometer 25 of the Cassia road and instantly killed. Nobody knew who had struck him. The hit-and-run driver had fled the scene of the accident like a coward. That's exactly what the paper said: *like a coward*. Except for those three little words that burned a hole in my brain, it didn't take more than four lines to report on what was, after all, only the death of a man.

During the next couple of days I could think of nothing else. I know that I am only a truck driver, but who can claim that truck drivers have no conscience? A truck driver has a lot of time to mull over his own private business, during the long hours behind the wheel or lying in the truck's sleeping berth. And when, as in my case, that private business is not all it ought to be, thinking can get to be really pretty tough.

One thing in particular kept nagging at me. I just couldn't understand why I hadn't stopped, why I hadn't tried to help the poor guy. I lived the scene over and over again. I would be gauging the distances again before passing that car; I would feel my foot pressing down hard on the accelerator. Then the man's body would come flying up in front of my windshield . . . and at this point I would deliberately block out the picture, and I would think, "Now, jam on your brakes, jump down, run into the field, pick him up, put him in the bed on the truck, and rush him to Santo Spirito Hospital . . ."

But, you poor fool, you're just dreaming again. I had *not* stopped; I had driven straight on, with head lowered like a bull after a goring. To make a long story short, the more I thought about that split second when I had stepped on the gas instead of jamming on the brakes, the less I could make it out.

Cowardice—that was the word for it all right. But why does a man who has, or at least thinks he has guts, turn into a coward without a moment's warning? That stumped me. Yet the cold hard facts were there: the dead man was really dead; that split second when I might have stopped had passed and was now sinking farther and farther away and no one would ever be able to bring it back. I was no longer the Gino who had passed that car but another Gino who had killed a man and then had run away.

I lay awake nights over it. I grew gloomy and silent and after a while everybody shied away from me at the yard and after work: nobody wants to pass the time with a killjoy. So I carried my secret around as if it were a hot diamond that you can't entrust to anyone or plant anywhere.

Then, after a while, I began

thinking about it less and less and I can even say that there came a time when I didn't think about it at all. But the secret was still stowed away deep down inside me and it weighed on my conscience and kept me from enjoying life. I often thought that I would have felt better if I could have told somebody about it. I wasn't exactly looking for approval —I realized there was no pardon for what I had done—but if I could have told this secret of mine I would have thrown off part of its dead weight onto somebody else who would have helped me carry it.

But who could I tell it to? To my friends at the yard? They had other things to worry about. To my family? I had none, being a foundling. My girl friend? She would have been the logical person because, as everybody knows, women are good at understanding you and giving you sympathy when you need it; but unfortunately I had no girl friend.

One Sunday in May I went walking outside the Rome city gates with a girl I had met some time before when I had given her and one of her friends a lift in my truck. She had told me her name and address, and I had seen her again a couple of times. We had enjoyed each other's company, and she had made it clear that she liked me and would be willing to go out with me.

Her name was Iris. She was a lady's maid in the house of some wealthy woman who had lots of servants. I had fallen from the start for her serious little oval face and those great big sad gray eyes of hers. In short, here was just the girl for me in the present circumstances.

After we had had a cup of coffee at the Exposition Grounds, with all those columns around us, she finally agreed in her shy, silent, and gentle way to go and sit with me in a meadow not far from St. Paul's Gate, where you get a good view of the Tiber and of the new apartment houses lined up on the opposite bank. She had spread out a handkerchief on the grass to keep her skirt from getting dirty and she sat quietly, her legs tucked under her, her hands in her lap, gazing across at the big white buildings on the other side of the river.

I noticed that there were lots of daisies in the grass around us; and like a flash I remembered the soft whiteness of those other daisies among which, just a month earlier, I had seen lying still and dead the man I had struck down. I don't know what got into me but suddenly I couldn't hold back the urge to tell her my secret. If I tell her, I thought, I'll get rid of the load on my chest.

She wasn't one of those dizzy, empty-headed girls who, after you've told them a secret, make you feel so much worse than you did before that you could kick yourself hard for having spilled all you know. She was a nice, understanding person who had doubtless had

her share of knocks in life—and they must have been pretty rough knocks if the sad little look on her face meant anything.

Just to break the ice, I said to her, in an offhand way, "What are you thinking about, Iris?"

She was just raising her hand to choke back a yawn. Perhaps she was tired. She said, "Nothing."

I didn't let that answer get me down but quickly went on. "Iris, you know that I like you a lot, don't you? That's why I feel that I shouldn't hide anything from you. You've got to know everything about me. Iris, I've got a secret."

She kept on looking at the tall buildings on the other side of the river, all the while fingering a little red lump on her chin, a tiny spring pimple.

"What secret?" she asked.

With an effort I got it out. "I've killed a man."

She didn't move but kept on poking gently at her chin. Then she shivered all over, as though she had finally understood. "You've killed a man? And you tell me about it just like that?"

"And how else do you expect me to tell you?"

She said nothing. She seemed to be looking for something on the ground. I went on. "Let's get this thing straight. I didn't mean to kill him."

Suddenly she found what she wanted; picking a long blade of grass she put it into her mouth and began chewing on it, thoughtfully.

Then, hurriedly, but without hiding anything, I told her about the accident, bringing out the part about my cowardice. I got pretty wrought up in spite of myself, but already I was beginning to feel relieved. I concluded, "Now tell me what you think about all this."

She kept munching on her blade of grass and didn't say a word.

I insisted. "I'll bet that now you can't stand the sight of me."

I saw her shrug lightly. "And why shouldn't I be able to stand the sight of you?"

"Well, I don't know. After all, it was my fault that poor guy got killed."

"And it bothers you?"

"Yes. Terribly." Suddenly my throat closed tight as if over a hard knot of tears. "I feel as if I can't go on living. No man can go on living if he thinks he's a coward."

"Was it in the papers?"

"Yes. They gave it four lines. Just to say he had been killed and that nobody knew who had hit him."

Suddenly she asked, "What time is it?"

"Five fifteen."

Another silence. "Listen, Iris, what does a man have to do to find out what's going on in that mind of yours?"

She shifted the blade of grass from one corner of her mouth to the other and said frankly, "Well, if you must know, there's nothing on

my mind. I feel good and I'm not thinking about anything."

I couldn't believe my ears. I protested. "It can't be! You must have been thinking something about something. I'm sure of it."

I saw her smile faintly. "Well, as a matter of fact, I was thinking about something. But if I tell you, you'll never believe it."

Hopefully, I asked, "Was it about me?"

"Good heavens, no! It had absolutely nothing to do with you!"

"What was it, then?"

She said slowly, "It was just one of those things that only women think about. I was looking at my shoes and seeing that they have holes in them. I was thinking that there is a big clearance sale on in Via Cola di Rienzo and that I've got to go there tomorrow and buy myself a pair of new shoes. There . . . are you satisfied?"

This time I shut up like a clam, my face dark and brooding. She noticed it and exclaimed, "Oh, dear! You're not mad, are you?"

I couldn't help blurting out. "Sure, I'm mad. Damn mad. Here I tell you the secret of my life, and it makes so little impression on you I wonder why I didn't keep it to myself!"

This bothered her a bit. "No," she said, "I'm glad you told me about it. It really did make an impression on me."

"Well, what kind of an impression?"

She thought it over and then said, scrupulously, "Well, I'm sorry that such a thing had to happen to you. It must have been awful."

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"I also think," she added, fingering the pimple on her chin, "that it's only right it should bother you."

"Why?"

"Well, you said so yourself. You ought to have stopped to help him but you didn't."

"Then you think I am a coward?"

"A coward? Well, yes . . . and then no. After all, a thing like that could happen to anybody."

"But you just said that I ought to have stopped!"

"You should have; but you didn't . . ."

At this point I saw her glance down at something in the daisies. "Oh, look! How pretty!"

It was an insect, a green and gold beetle, resting on the white petals of a daisy. Suddenly I felt as if I were emptied out—almost as if that secret over which I had agonized so long had vanished in the spring air, carried away, lightly, like the white butterflies that were flitting around in pairs in the sunlight.

Yet with one dogged last hope, I asked, "But tell me, Iris, in your opinion, was I right or wrong not to stop?"

"You were right and you were wrong. Of course, you ought to have stopped. After all, you had run into him. But, on the other hand, what good would it have done if

you had? He was dead by that time anyway and you would probably have got into a terrible mess. You were both right and wrong."

After these words a thought flashed through my mind. "This is the end of Iris. I'll never take her out again. I thought she was a bright, understanding girl. Instead, she is really nothing but a half-wit. Enough is enough." I jumped to my feet.

"Come on, let's go," I said. "Otherwise, we'll be late for the movies."

Once inside the theater, in the dark, she slipped her hand into mine, forcing her finger through mine. I didn't budge. The film was a love story, a real tear-jerker. When the lights went on at the end I saw that her big gray eyes were filled with tears and that her cheeks were wet.

"I just can't help it," she said, patting her face dry with a handkerchief. "Pictures like this always make me want to cry."

Afterward we went into a bar and ordered coffee. She pressed so close to me that our bodies touched. Just as the espresso machine let off a loud stream of steam, she said softly, "You know that I really like you, don't you?" staring at me with those great big beautiful eyes of hers.

I felt like answering, "Fine. You really like me, but you'll let me carry the whole weight of my secret alone!" Instead, I said nothing.

Now I understood that from her, as from everybody else, I could ask only for affection, nothing more than that.

I answered with a sigh, "I like you a lot, too."

But already she had stopped listening to me. She was peering at herself in the mirror behind the bar, absorbed and concerned as she fingered the little red lump on her chin.

We once described a short story by Tolstoy as "ironical, satirical, even cynical." Perhaps the same adjectives can be applied to "The Man of God"; but if they are, it would be only fair to add two more—"moving" and "tender" . . . Another fascinating story by Count Lyof Nikolaievitch Tolstoy, author of such masterpieces as WAR AND PEACE *and* ANNA KARENINA . . .

THE MAN OF GOD

by LEO TOLSTOY

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE LIVED in the city of Vladimir a young merchant named Aksenof. He had two shops and a house.

Aksenof himself had a ruddy complexion and curly hair; he was a very jolly fellow and a good singer. When he was young he used to drink too much, and when he was tipsy he was turbulent; but after his marriage he ceased drinking, and only occasionally had a spree.

One time in summer Aksenof was going to Nizhni to the great Fair. As he was about to bid his family goodby, his wife said to him, "Ivan Dmitrievitch, do not go today. I had a dream, and dreamed that some misfortune befell you."

Aksenof laughed at her, and said, "You are always afraid that I shall go on a spree at the Fair."

His wife said, "I myself know not what I am afraid of, but I had such a strange dream. You seemed to be coming home from town, and you took off your hat, and I looked, and your head was all gray."

Aksenof laughed. "That means good luck. See, I am going now. I will bring you some rich remembrances."

And he bade his family farewell and set off.

When he had gone half his journey, he fell in with a merchant of his acquaintance, and the two stopped at the same tavern for the night. They took tea together, and went to sleep in adjoining rooms.

Aksenof did not want to sleep long; he awoke in the middle of the night, and in order that he might get a good start while it was cool he aroused his driver and bade him harness up, went down into the smoky hut, settled his account with the landlord, and started on his way.

After he had driven forty versts, he stopped to get something to eat; he rested in the vestibule of the inn, and when it was noon, he went to the doorstep and ordered the samovar got ready; then he took out his guitar and began to play.

Suddenly a troïka with a bell dashed up to the inn and from the equipage leaped an official and two soldiers; he came directly up to Aksenof and asked, "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

Aksenof answered without hesitation, and asked him if he would not have a glass of tea with him.

But the official kept on with his questions. "Where did you spend last night? Were you alone or with a merchant? Have you seen the merchant this morning? Why did you leave so early this morning?"

Aksenof wondered why he was questioned so closely; but he told everything just as it was, and he asked, "Why do you ask me so many questions? I am not a thief or a murderer. I am on my own business—there is nothing to question me about."

Then the official called up the soldiers, and said, "I am the police Inspector, and I have made these inquiries of you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been stabbed. Show me your things, and you men search him."

They went into the tavern, brought in the trunk and bag, and began to open and search them. Suddenly the Inspector pulled out from the bag a knife, and demanded, "Whose knife is this?"

Aksenof looked and saw a knife covered with blood, and he was frightened.

"And whose blood is that on the knife?"

Aksenof tried to answer, but he could not articulate his words.

"I—I—don't—know— I— That knife—it is—not mine—"

Then the Inspector said, "This morning the merchant was found stabbed to death in his bed. No one except you could have done it. The tavern was locked on the inside, and there was no one in the tavern except yourself. And here is the bloody knife in your bag, and your guilt is evident in your face. Tell me how you killed him and how much money you took from him."

Aksenof swore that he had not done it, that he had not seen the merchant after he had drunk tea with him, that the only money that he had with him—8000 rubles—was his own, and that the knife was not his.

But his voice trembled, his face was pale, and he was quivering with fright, like a guilty person.

The police Inspector called the soldiers, commanded them to bind Aksenof and take him to the wagon. When they did so, with his feet tied, Aksenof crossed himself and burst into tears.

They confiscated Aksenof's possessions and his money, took him

to the next city, and threw him into prison.

They sent to Vladimir to make inquiries about Aksenof's character, and all the merchants and citizens of Vladimir declared that Aksenof, when he was young, used to drink and was wild, but that now he was a worthy man. Then he was brought up for judgment. He was sentenced for having killed the merchant and for having robbed him of 20,000 rubles.

Aksenof's wife was dumfounded by the news, and did not know what to think. Her children were still small, and there was one at the breast. She took them all with her and journeyed to the city where her husband was imprisoned.

At first they would not grant her admittance, but afterward she got permission from the Chief, and was taken to her husband.

When she saw him in his prison garb, in chains together with murderers, she fell to the floor, and it was a long time before she recovered from her swoon. Then she placed her children around her, sat down amid them, and began to tell him about their domestic affairs, and to ask him about everything that had happened to him.

He told her the whole story.

She asked, "What is to be the result of it?"

He said, "We must petition the Czar. It is impossible that an innocent man should be condemned."

The wife said she already had sent a petition to the Czar, but that the petition had not been granted. Aksenof said nothing, but was evidently very much downcast.

Then his wife said, "You see the dream that I had—when I dreamed that you had become grayheaded—meant something, after all. Already your hair has begun to turn gray with trouble. You ought to have stayed at home that time."

And she began to tear her hair, and said, "Vanya, my dearest husband, tell your wife the truth: did you commit that crime or not?"

Aksenof said, "So you, too, have no faith in me!" And he wrung his hands and wept.

Then a soldier came and said that it was time for the wife and children to go. And Aksenof for the last time bade farewell to his family.

When his wife was gone, Aksenof began to think over all that they had said. When he remembered that his wife had also distrusted him, and had asked him if he had murdered the merchant, he said to himself, "It is evident that no one but God can know the truth of the matter, and He is the only one to ask for mercy, and He is the only one from whom to expect it."

And from that time Aksenof ceased to send in petitions, ceased to hope, and only prayed to God. Aksenof was sentenced to be knouted, and then to exile with hard labor. And so it was done.

He was flogged with the knout, and then, when the wounds were

healed, he was sent with other exiles to Siberia.

Aksenof lived twenty-six years in the mines. The hair on his head had become white as snow, and his beard had grown long, thin, and gray. All his gaiety had vanished.

He was bent, his gait was slow, he spoke little, he never laughed, and he spent much of his time in prayer.

Aksenof had learned while in prison to make boots, and with the money that he earned he bought the *Book of Martyrs,* and used to read it when it was light enough in prison; and on holidays he would go to the prison church, read the Gospels, and sing in the choir, for his voice was still strong and good.

The authorities liked Akensof for his submissiveness, and his prison associates respected him and called him "Grandfather" and the "man of God." Whenever they had petitions to be presented, Aksenof was always chosen to carry them to the authorities; and when quarrels arose among the prisoners, they always came to Aksenof to be the judge.

Aksenof never received any letters from home, so he did not know whether his wife and children were alive.

One time some new convicts came to the prison. In the evening all the old convicts gathered around the newcomers and began to ply them with questions as to the cities or villages from which this one or that had come, and what their crimes were.

At this time Aksenof was sitting on his bunk, near the strangers, and with bowed head was listening to what was said.

One of the new convicts was a tall, healthy-looking old man of sixty years, with a close-cropped gray beard. He was telling why he had been arrested.

"And so, brothers, I was sent here for nothing. I unharnessed a horse from a postboy's sledge, and they caught me in it, and insisted that I was stealing it. 'But,' says I, 'I only wanted to go a little faster, so I whipped up the horse. And besides, the driver is a friend of mine. It's all right,' says I. 'No,' say they; 'you were stealing it.' I have done things which long ago would have sent me here, but I was not found out; and now they have sent me here without any justice in it. But what's the use of grumbling? I have been in Siberia before."

"Where did you come from?" asked one of the convicts.

"Well, we came from the city of Vladimir; we are citizens of that place. My name is Makar, and my father's name was Semyon."

Aksenof raised his head and asked, "Tell me, Semyonitch, have you ever heard of the Aksenofs, merchants in Vladimir city? Are they alive?"

"Indeed, I have heard of them! They are rich merchants, though their father is in Siberia. It seems he

was just like any of the rest of us sinners. And now tell me, Grandfather, what were you sent here for?"

Aksenof did not like to speak of his misfortune; he sighed, and said, "Twenty-six years ago I was condemned to hard labor on account of my sins."

Makar Semyonof said, "But what was your crime?"

Aksenof replied, "I must, therefore, have deserved this."

But he would not tell or give any further particulars; the other convicts, however, related why Aksenof had been sent to Siberia. They told how on the road someone had killed a merchant and put the knife into Aksenof's luggage, and how he had been unjustly punished for this.

When Makar heard this, he glanced at Aksenof, clasped his hands round his knees, and said, "Well, now, that's wonderful, Grandfather!"

They began to ask him what he thought was wonderful, and where he had seen Aksenof. But Makar did not answer; he only repeated, "A miracle! How wonderful that we should meet again!"

And when he said these words it came over Aksenof that perhaps this man might know who it was that had killed the merchant. And he said, "Did you ever hear of that crime, Semyonitch, or did you ever see me before?"

"Of course I heard of it! The country was full of it. But it happened a long time ago. And I have forgotten what I heard," said Makar.

"Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksenof.

Makar laughed, and said, "Why, of course—the man who had the knife in his bag killed him. If anyone put the knife in your things and was not caught doing it—that would have been impossible. For how could they have put the knife in your bag? Was it not standing close by your head? And you would have heard it, wouldn't you?"

As soon as Aksenof heard these words he felt convinced that this was the very man who had killed the merchant.

He stood up and walked away. All that night he was unable to sleep. Deep melancholy came upon him, and he began to call back the past in his imagination.

He imagined his wife as she had been when for the last time she had come to see him in the prison. She seemed to stand before him exactly as though she were alive, and he saw her face and her eyes, and he seemed to hear her words and her laugh.

Then his imagination brought up his children before him—one a little boy in a little fur coat, and the other on his mother's breast.

And he imagined himself as he was at that time, young and happy. He remembered how he had sat on the steps of the tavern when they arrested him, and how his soul was

full of joy as he played his guitar.

And he remembered the place of execution where they had knouted him, and the knoutsman, and the people standing around, and the chains and the convicts, and all his twenty-six years of prison life, and he remembered his old age. And such melancholy came upon Aksenof that he was tempted to put an end to himself.

"And all on account of this criminal!" said Aksenof to himself.

And then he began to feel such anger against Makar Semyonof that he almost fell upon him, and was crazy with desire for vengeance. He repeated prayers all night, but could not recover his calm. When day came he walked by Makar and did not look at him.

Thus passed two weeks. Aksenof was not able to sleep, and such melancholy had come over him that he did not know what to do.

One time during the night, as he happened to be passing through the prison, he saw that the soil was disturbed under one of the bunks. He stopped to examine it. Suddenly Makar crept from under the bunk and looked at Aksenof with a startled face.

Aksenof was about to pass on so as not to see him, but Makar seized his arm, and told him how he had been digging a passage under the wall, and how every day he carried the dirt out in his pockets and emptied it in the street when they went out to work.

"If you only keep quiet, old man, I will get you out too. But if you tell on me, they will flog me; but afterward I will kill you."

When Askenof saw his enemy, he trembled with rage, twitched away his arm, and said, "I have no reason to make my escape, and to kill me would do no harm; you killed me long ago. But as to telling on you or not, I shall do as God sees fit to have me."

On the next day, when they took the convicts out to work, the soldiers discovered where Makar had been digging in the ground; they began to make a search and found the hole. The Chief came into the prison and asked everyone, "Who was digging that hole?"

All denied it. Those who knew did not name Makar, because they were aware that he would be flogged half to death for such an attempt.

Then the Chief came to Aksenof. He knew that Aksenof was a truthful man, and he said, "Old man, you are truthful. Tell me before God who did this."

Makar was standing near, in great excitement, and did not dare to look at Aksenof.

Aksenof's hands and lips trembled, and it was some time before he could speak a word. He said to himself, "If I shield him— But why should I forgive him when he has been my ruin? Let him suffer for my sufferings! But shall I tell on him? They will surely flog him.

But what difference does it make what I think of him? Will it be any the easier for me?"

Once more the Chief demanded, "Well, old man, tell the truth! Who dug the hole?"

Aksenof glanced at Makar, and then said, "I cannot tell, your Honor. God does not bid me tell. Do with me as you please. I am in your power."

In spite of all the Chief's efforts Aksenof would say nothing more. And so they failed to find out who dug the hole.

On the next night as Aksenof was lying on his bunk, and almost asleep, he heard someone come along and sit down at his feet.

He peered through the darkness and saw that it was Makar.

Aksenof asked, "What do you wish of me? What are you doing here?"

Makar remained silent. Aksenof arose, and said, "What do you want? Go away, or else I will call the guard."

Makar went up close to Aksenof and said in a whisper, "Ivan Dmitritch, forgive me!"

Aksenof said, "What have I to forgive you?"

"It was I who killed the merchant and put the knife in your bag. And I was going to kill you too, but there was a noise in the yard. I thrust the knife in your bag, and slipped out of the window."

Aksenof did not know what to say. Makar got down from the bunk, knelt on the ground, and said, "Ivan Dmitritch, forgive me, forgive me for Christ's sake. I will confess that I killed the merchant—they will pardon you. You will be able to go home."

Aksenof said, "It is easy for you to say that, but how could I endure it? Where should I go now? My wife is probably dead, my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go."

Makar did not rise; he beat his head on the ground, and said, "Ivan Dmitritch, forgive me! When they flogged me with the knout, it was easier to bear than it is now to look at you. And you had pity on me after all this—you did not tell on me. Forgive me, for Christ's sake! Forgive me, though I am a cursed villain!"

And the man began to sob.

When Aksenof heard Makar Semyonof sobbing, he himself burst into tears, and said, "God will forgive you; maybe I am a hundred times worse than you are!"

And suddenly he felt a wonderful peace in his soul. And he ceased to mourn for his home, and had no desire to leave the prison, but only thought of his last hour.

Makar would not listen to Aksenof, and confessed his crime.

When they came to let Aksenof go home, he was dead.

from CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Here is a rare detective story—a story from a part of Europe from which you wouldn't expect this kind of story. For "The Classic Semerák Case" is not only a pure detective story in the most traditional sense, it is also that rara avis *from any part of the world—the humorous detective story.*

The author, Josef Škvorecký, tells us something of his detective's background and character. Lieutenant Borůvka is in his late forties, a stout fellow (though not as fat as Nero Wolfe or Dr. Gideon Fell). In his younger days, before becoming a policeman, he was a teacher of physical training, so now, in middle age, he can move surprisingly fast—when he wants to. By nature he is a mournful man: first, because he always gets sad when he finally pins down a murderer—"this is a sadness for all mankind"; and second, because he is already beginning to feel his age. The name "Borůvka," by the way, means "Blueberry."

So now meet, in his first appearance in the United States (and in the English language) an endearing, and perhaps enduring, detective—the likable Lieutenant "Blueberry."

THE CLASSIC SEMERÁK CASE

by JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ

(translated by Káča Poláčková)

THERE WAS NO TALKING HIM OUT OF IT. CONSTABLE FIRST CLASS ŠINTÁK —the only policeman in all Czechoslovakia who could boast that rank—was firmly convinced that Lieutenant Borůvka wielded powers not entirely in keeping with normal human abilities. But then, Constable Šinták was pushing 60, and had strong religious feelings, though he kept them secret while on duty. In his native village in the Orlice Hills, where he spent his vacations and took part in séances held in the cottage of a former weaver named Potěšil, he felt no such inhibitions, and as far as his superior was concerned, he told all. To Constable First Class Šinták, Lieutenant Borůvka was a wizard.

The Lieutenant proved it, definitely and irrevocably, in the classic Semerák case. That was the investigation to which Borůvka arrived late, having spent

the previous evening at his 30-year class reunion at K. After celebrating until the wee hours of the night, he fell prey to depression, and besides, his alarm clock failed to ring.

So early that afternoon, when he arrived at the scene of the crime—a group of bungalows of the sort built before the war by worker-individualists at the cost of their life's savings—Sergeant Málek was just about through with the case, and all he was waiting for were the results of the laboratory tests.

"That," said the young sergeant to the Lieutenant, "is the only hitch. From the psychological point of view, you can tell that fellow's a murderer a mile off. But we can't have anybody accusing us of having made an arrest too soon. Psychologically speaking, he's every inch a murderer—just look at him! And then what happens if it turns out we're wrong? The public gets all worked up, and when the Chief gets finished with us we won't even be fit to pound a beat," declared the sergeant. "No, sir, a person has to have some insurance, and our insurance is the modern science of criminology."

While the sergeant was acquainting the Lieutenant with his philosophy of criminal investigation, Borůvka let his mournful baby-blue eyes systematically examine the dismal attic. Hanging by her neck from a rope tied to a beam in the middle of the attic ceiling was an old woman in a dirty plaid dress, her gray hair concealing her face. About the height of the Lieutenant's belt buckle the toes of one foot still balanced a worn bedroom slipper, and the other foot was bare. On the attic floor, under the corpse, lay the other bedroom slipper, like a sad, deserted little animal.

Aside from that, the attic contained only a few musty cupboards, some flowerpots, a few crates, and a stack of yellowed newspapers; the Lieutenant wondered idly if he would find, were he to go through them, reports on the Lindbergh kidnaping, or the Sacco-Vanzetti story. The open skylight let in the cool breeze of Indian summer, and for a moment the breeze blew the hair away from the dead woman's face.

"Suicide?" scoffed the sergeant. "Pooh. Oh, yes, it all adds up—she had asthma, she had it bad, and she kept threatening that some day she'd hang herself. The neighbors back him up on that. But, Lieutenant, look at the strangulation marks. Wait a minute," he glanced around, "we'll get you a chair. Constable, find us a chair, and then you can take a good look at those marks."

And while Constable First Class Šinták was obeying orders, Málek kept on talking. It was the first case he'd ever had all to himself, and he could thank the Lieutenant's celebration of the previous evening and his unwound alarm clock. He was just quivering to show his superior that he was Johnny-on-the-spot. And so he continued in fine fettle.

"Everything is just too pat. The old lady herself talked about suicide. But what about the strangulation marks? They taught us that strangulation marks from hanging slant from chin to nape. And this one has two sets of marks—at least, I'm willing to bet that's what they are. Just wait till you see for yourself. It's not too clear, and the rope is still in one set of them, but if you look closely, you can see another set just below the rope. Nobody's going to tell me she jerked her head *after* she hanged herself!

"Šinťák says there's just one set, or else it's a double set because the old lady tensed her neck muscles, and after they relaxed, she slipped lower in the noose. But I say that's nonsense. And that's why I left her strung up. The doctor wanted to take her down—he said he couldn't be sure of anything until he had her on the autopsy table, but I took it on myself. No, sir, I said, the Lieutenant has to see this just the way it is!"

"Well, thank you for your confidence, Paul," said the embarrassed Lieutenant Borůvka, and his mournful gaze rested on the eager tanned face of the younger detective. "Of course—"

"Of course that goes without saying, doesn't it?" interrupted Málek. "You're in charge here, and you've got to see it. And in the meantime take a look at this," he added proudly, and unfolded a piece of paper for the Lieutenant to see. "I made a sketch, a sort of map, you see? I remember in your course on Methods of Scientific Investigation you gave a lecture on that case in Moravia, and you used a map to analyze the crucial times and the topographical situation to put your finger on the murderer."

"Yes," said the Lieutenant somberly, "but—"

"But look," Málek interrupted again. "Here you have it black on white, everywhere the murderer—I mean the suspect—claims he went, and all the time and distance factors."

"Yes, but—"

"But first I've got to report on how we managed the investigation," and Málek continued with such enthusiasm that he didn't even hear the Lieutenant's resigned sigh. Borůvka capitulated. His smooth round forehead crinkled unhappily, and his sad eyes focused on the sergeant's map, painstakingly executed in colored pencils.

"Old Semerák phoned at 12:45 from the booth down the road," the sergeant rushed on. "At 12:57 we were here at the scene of the crime. We found everything just the way you see it—we didn't move a thing. Semerák claims that he left the tavern at 12:00—midnight—found his house empty and his wife hanging from this beam in the attic.

"So he went to phone the police, he says. That in itself is peculiar—home from the tavern at 12:30 and already phoning us at 12:45. And the phone booth a good ten minutes' walk from here. That doesn't sound as if he had to

look very hard for his wife. It sounds as if he knew just where to find her and went straight up to the attic."

"Certainly," Lieutenant Borůvka made another feeble attempt. "But—"

"But let's take a closer look at old Semerák's story," Málek picked up his superior's last word. "He claims to have left the house at 6:00 p.m. and that's a fact. His neighbor backs him up, a fellow named Pěnkava, a railwayman. He was just arriving home when Semerák was leaving his house. They exchanged a few words, and what do you think they talked about? The weather! And then Semerák remembered he forgot his tobacco pouch. So what do you think he did?"

The Lieutenant shrugged helplessly. "I don't know. Maybe he—"

"He called his wife!" declared Málek triumphantly. "Instead of fetching the tobacco pouch himself, he called his wife, and the two of them bickered back and forth over the fence about where she was to look for it. You see? Pěnkava saw her alive! That's perfect, isn't it?"

Lieutenant Borůvka nodded glumly.

"That's what I call an alibi." The elated Málek rubbed his hands. "The murderer—I mean the suspect—has a witness to testify when he left the house, who can swear to the exact time, because Pěnkava commutes to work and takes the 5:45 train back every day. And the witness sees the wife too, large as life.

"And that isn't all. There are two other witnesses to back up Semerák's story. One met him at the crucifix by the road, and the other about a quarter of an hour later at the bus stop. He stopped to chat with both of them—can you imagine that, old close-mouthed Semerák *chatting!* And what do you suppose they chatted about? The weather again! A fellow who never says an unnecessary word—and I've got witnesses to back that up—suddenly feels the urge to make small-talk about the weather. With three consecutive passers-by. The very day his wife hangs herself. That's one thing."

"Yes," said Lieutenant Borůvka, "and—"

"And another thing: he makes sure he leaves his house just when he knows Pěnkava always comes home from work, when he knows for certain that he'll meet him. And he needs to meet him, needs Pěnkava to see his wife, alive, and so, on this particular day, the day his wife does herself in, he forgets his tobacco pouch. And he doesn't bother to get it himself—instead he makes his asthmatic old lady do the running around."

The young sergeant glanced triumphantly at the frail old woman hanging over their heads, and then at the Lieutenant.

"Hm," the older man cleared his throat, "your deductions are excellent. Hats off to you there. Nobody puts anything over on you. It's just that—"

"That is not all," said Málek hurriedly. "I'll show you a lot of weak spots

and tangles and discrepancies in Semerák's story. Like where he claims he went to see a certain Bárta for some beeswax. Bárta is a well-known beekeeper in these parts, and Semerák keeps bees too. Not very successfully, but he keeps them all the same. You can tell if you look at the hives in the garden back of the bungalow. Honestly, the only bees that could keep alive in those hives are fourth-rate bees. Bum bees," laughed the sergeant.

"Well, anyway, Bárta and his wife live in a cabin on the edge of the woods about two miles up the road. Semerák arrived there at 6:45, stayed for about three-quarters of an hour, and then took the path through the woods to the tavern. Look at the map I sketched. He arrived at the tavern at about 8:45, and by 9:00 he was sitting at the card table. He played cards till nearly 12:00, then he went home. It's a mile and a half from the tavern to this house and it took him half an hour. That's all right, that's just fine, but—"

"But—" Lieutenant Borůvka looked away from the dead woman, and his gaze rested on the flushed face of Sergeant Málek again.

"But even if a lot of things seem all right in his story," Málek picked up quickly, "some of them just don't stand up under examination. Look here —the map of the area he covered."

"Yes, fine," said the Lieutenant, "you did a good job. Still—"

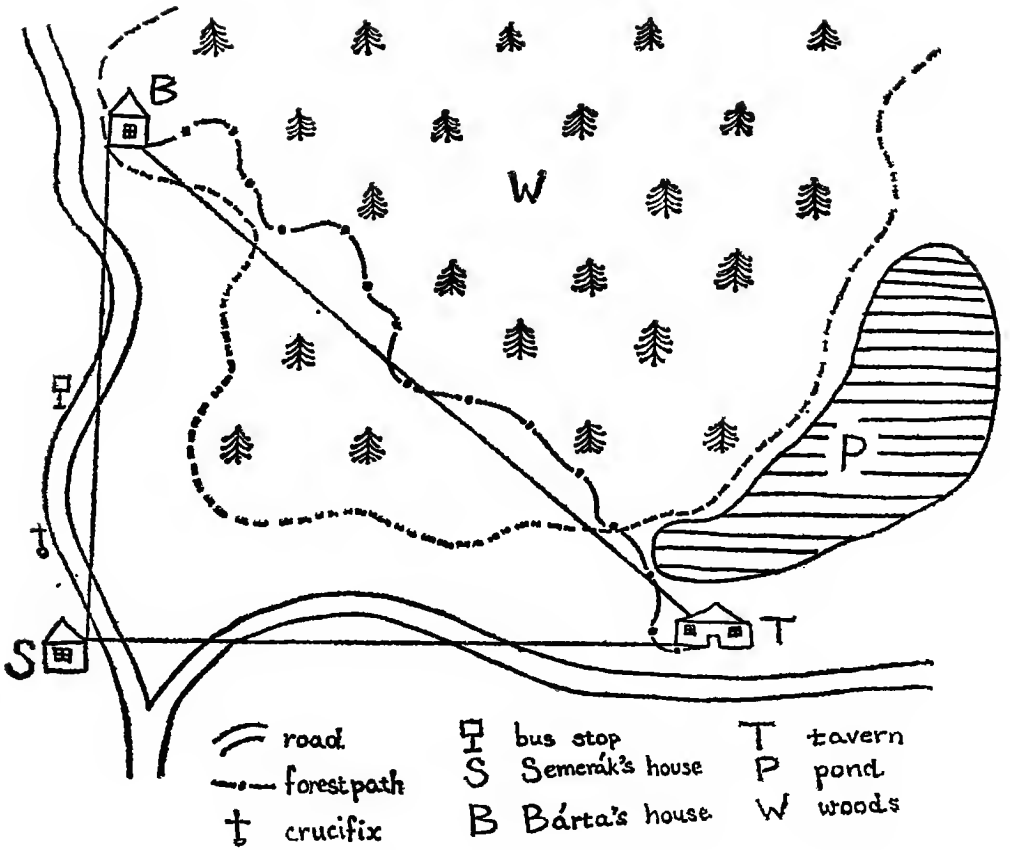
"Still you want to see the time chart, don't you?" He handed the Lieutenant another piece of paper. "And here, below it, is a chart comparing times and distances."

Lieutenant Borůvka took a look.

6:00 p.m.—departure from S
6:45 p.m.—arrival at B
7:30 p.m.—departure from B
8:45 p.m.—arrival at T
12:00 p.m.—departure from T
12:30 a.m.—return to S
12:45 a.m.—phoned police
12:57 a.m.—arrival of police on scene of crime

DISTANCES AND CORRESPONDING TIMES

S-B	1.7 miles—45 minutes walk (including two stopovers)
B-T	3 miles—1 hour walk
T-S	1.5 miles—30 minutes walk
B-S-T	3.2 miles—1 hour 4 minutes walk
B-S-B-T	6.4 miles—2 hours 8 minutes walk



"Why did you figure distances B-S-T and B-S-B-T?" asked the Lieutenant in spite of himself after he had studied the charts.

The sergeant grinned. "I'll tell you. Look, first of all, I'm making the hypothetical assumption that Semerák is a murderer, that the old lady didn't hang herself, that Semerák strangled her and then strung her up on this beam here."

"But that's—"

"That's jumping to conclusions. I admit I can't prove a thing. Not yet, anyway."

"I think—"

"I think I have very good reasons to believe that's what happened!"

The older detective relinquished all hope of getting a word in edgewise. He left it to the young sergeant, who took full advantage of this opportunity.

"All right, then, assuming that Semerák murdered her. His alibi is airtight, on first glance. He left his house at 6:00—a witness saw his wife alive at that time. Between 6:00 and 6:45 two other witnesses talked to him, for

about ten minutes, at points between S and B. At 6:45 he arrived at B; here the time is right because he claims his watch had stopped and he asked Bárta what the right time was, and wound up his watch and set it. Bárta backs him up there too—6:45. We know just when he left Bárta's because Semerák looked at the wall clock, was surprised that it was already 7:30, and even though Bárta and his wife tried to get him to stay longer, he got up and left."

The only thing the Lieutenant had the strength to do was to clear his throat, and Málek was off again.

"Let's take another look at beekeeper Bárta and his wife before we follow Semerák to the tavern." The young sergeant sounded as if he were giving a lecture in a course for beginning criminologists. The Lieutenant let his gaze wander around the attic. "There's a number of interesting points," Málek went on. "First of all, Semerák's continued interest in the exact time. The day his wife hangs herself, his watch stops, and besides, that day of all days, he has to be at the tavern on time, as if he had heaven-knows-what kind of an important date there. And it turns out that all he's going to do there is play cards—and he doesn't even have the reputation of being much of a card player. The tavernkeeper says that Semerák isn't a regular at the card table, and when he does join in, he never stays at it for more than an hour. But yesterday of all days, he stayed at it for three hours.

"But back to the Bártas. Semerák's interest in the time is the first suspicious circumstance—inconspicuously calling the witnesses' attention to the exact time of his arrival and departure. Another interesting thing is the testimony of the beekeeper and his wife. I tried an old trick on them, one I learned from you." Málek smiled, and the round face of the Lieutenant was momentarily illuminated by an embarrassed smile. "I remembered," continued Málek, "how you told us in a lecture on Interrogation Tactics about the principle of 'the confrontation of testimony obtained from separate interrogations of witnesses to the same event'—remember? and so—"

The Lieutenant braced himself for another attempt to halt the flood of words pouring out of the sergeant's mouth. "Yes, I do recall lecturing on that. But in this case—"

His subordinate's enthusiastic eloquence took over again, and the Lieutenant gave a weary sigh.

"In this case," the sergeant said impatiently, "it was all perfectly simple and straightforward. On account of the jacket."

"Jacket?" breathed the Lieutenant weakly.

"Jacket. And then—listen to this—his bike!"

A significant silence ensued, and Málek gave a sidelong glance at the Lieutenant. The more experienced detective read in his look a craving for

recognition. Lieutenant Borůvka grew even sadder. He liked to make people happy. So he asked, with an effort at self-control, "His bike?"

"His bike." The sergeant rubbed his hands together. "That's part of the working hypothesis I finally set up. I mean, my hypothesis uses the bike as the theory's point of departure. And that's the main reason I drew the map." He tapped the paper the Lieutenant was still holding in his hand. "First of all, the jacket. I asked the Bártas, each one separately, what Semerák had on when he came to see them last night. And now, listen! Bárta claims Semerák wore a tweed jacket, and his wife insists it was a brown corduroy jacket. When I confronted them, they almost had a fist fight over it. Some couple, those two." The sergeant laughed. "Anybody who wants to get married ought to drop in on those two for a chat. Five'll get you ten he'll stay a confirmed bachelor like me, ha ha ha."

The Lieutenant's smile had a sadness that his subordinate failed to observe.

"They yelled at each other until we just about lost our eardrums, and the two of them were both hoarse, and in the middle of it old lady Bárta said, I mean she screamed, 'He had the same brown corduroy jacket on that he wore last week when he rode past here on that bike.' So there's another suspicious circumstance for you—a discrepancy between the testimony of two witnesses.

"Of course the discrepancy by itself doesn't mean much—men don't usually notice what a person wears. But all the same, what if the whole thing was planned, you understand? What if it was a fake alibi? What if Semerák didn't go to the Bártas' at all? What if he turned around at the bus stop after he spoke to the witness there, went home, did his old lady in, and then went to the tavern?

"You see, I found something very suspicious when I investigated the tavern—but I'll get to that later. First this: what if they planned this alibi, but got mixed up on the details? You always used to tell us that a false alibi is easy to break down by investigating the details. All I know about all this is thanks to you, Lieutenant."

Once again the older police officer's countenance assumed a sour smile, and the hand holding the map attempted something that resembled a gesture of rejection. The sergeant responded at once.

"I know it isn't very probable, setting up an alibi for a murder with two people at once, and one of them the biggest gossip for miles around. I don't think too much of that theory myself—I'm just telling you about it so you can follow my thought processes right down the line. What's much more interesting is what the beekeeper's wife said about the bike. There wouldn't be anything odd about that—most of the people around here have bicycles.

But the hitch is that Semerák doesn't have a bike! And besides, he denies the encounter with old lady Bárta last week."

The sergeant's eyes were pleading for praise. Lieutenant Borůvka cleared his throat. "Yes," he said somberly, "that's good work as far as deduction is concerned. In other words, the bike led you to the conclusion that—"

The sergeant, encouraged, launched his explanation with increased verve. "That the time correlations are false. If Semerák had a bicycle hidden somewhere, then the timetable would be entirely different. Look!" He removed still another piece of paper from his breast pocket, saying, "I believe in being systematic. Our complete investigative technique is based on system, on strict order, so we criminologists can't allow ourselves to be guided by haphazard ideas the way they do in detective books."

The timetable was truly systematic:

	Distances and Corresponding Times by Bicycle
B-S-T	3.2 miles—about 20 minutes
T-S-T	3 miles—about 18 minutes
B-S-B-T	6.4 miles—about 40 minutes

	As Above Plus 20 Minutes for the Crime
B-S-T	about 40 minutes
T-S-T	about 38 minutes
B-S-B-T	about 1 hour

Lieutenant Borůvka took a long time to mull over the information presented in the sergeant's precise handwriting. It looked as if he were undergoing some sort of inner struggle. Then he sighed, cleared his throat again, and asked, "Why did you figure the times for T-S-T?"

"T-S-T, yes—I was getting to that." The sergeant took the map from the Lieutenant's hand and indicated point B with his index finger. "Assuming that Semerák had the bike hidden near the beekeeper's cabin—and that is entirely possible, the cabin is on the edge of the woods, with bushes all around. Well then, there are three possibilities. One: he left Bárta's at 7:30, got on his bike and rode from B to S—back home—committed the crime and then rode the stretch S-T to the tavern. So that B-S-T plus twenty minutes for the murder comes to, say, forty minutes. That means he had plenty of time to get rid of the bike near the tavern and to show up at the tavern at 8:45."

Lieutenant Borůvka nodded.

"But S-T is a comparatively busy stretch of road that early in the evening. Maybe Semerák didn't dare to risk being seen there, even though it was

already dark. He might have taken the road back from S to B, and then the forest path B-T. The stretch B-S-B-T plus twenty minutes for the murder would come to nearly an hour—still giving him plenty of time to reach the tavern by 8:45."

"Yes," said Lieutenant Borůvka, but he choked on it, and when he was through coughing, he asked, "But why figure the stretch T-S-T when you say that he was playing cards from 9:00 till nearly midnight? Besides, I wanted to—"

The Lieutenant didn't get to tell the sergeant what it was he wanted to do. Málek clutched his sleeve, leaned over to him and breathed his cigarette-flavored breath excitedly in the Lieutenant's face.

"That's just it, he wasn't playing cards all that time," he declared triumphantly. "He spent more than half an hour in the Men's Room!" The Lieutenant's face quivered as if he were in pain. "The witnesses don't agree as to just how long it was. We interrogated eight of them, including a couple of kibitzers, the tavernkeeper, and his daughter, who waits on table.

"Semerák claims that it wasn't over a quarter of an hour. One of the cardplayers claims that he was gone for almost an hour. It's all a matter of the relativity of the subjective perception of time," said Málek slowly, and he blinked his eyes for emphasis. "If we take an average, it comes to something between forty minutes and three-quarters of an hour. And that's enough for the stretch T-S-T plus time for the murder. Besides, Semerák's long stay in the Men's Room is symptomatic."

"How?" asked the Lieutenant uncertainly.

"Symp-to-matic," repeated the sergeant, enunciating every consonant. "It either gives him time to murder his wife, if he uses the route T-S-T, or else it proves that shortly before arriving at the tavern, Semerák experienced something that excited his nervous system considerably. Dr. Seifert once told us, in a course on Criminal Psychology, that the human organism frequently reacts to sudden excitement by an uncontrollable urge to move the bowels."

"Yes, I know." Lieutenant Borůvka appeared to delve deep into some reminiscence. He had a cool head, and was known to have twisted a loaded pistol out of a murderer's hand, and then when the fellow suddenly pulled a knife on him, to have knocked him down with a single well-aimed blow to the jaw. All the same, though, even Lieutenant Borůvka had occasionally experienced sudden excitement, with the accompanying reaction on the part of the human organism.

"In words of one syllable," continued Málek, "after he killed his wife, our friend got the runs. But here is where our criminological laboratory comes on the scene, with chemical and biological analyses."

The Lieutenant's face twitched. For an instant he was possessed by a fantastic image of some sort of odd laboratory analysis. But the sergeant corrected the error almost at once.

"A careful examination of the scene of the—I mean of the men's toilet in the tavern—proved that someone had recently climbed in or out of the window, or both. There are a number of items for dactyloscopic examination on the glass of the toilet window," said Málek importantly, and the older detective blinked. He was used to calling them "fingerprints," but then, the sergeant was a member of a younger, more scientific generation.

"And Semerák has some suspicious abrasions on the palm of his right hand. So I ordered a chemical analysis of the paint on the inside wall under the window, and of the suspect's clothes. We ought to have the results of the tests by four this afternoon. Furthermore, I had them fingerprint the suspect and make a comparison with the prints on the window. And finally, I ordered an investigation of the outside wall under the window, in search of human tissue identical with that of the suspect. I also ordered the removal of a sample of skin from Semerák's palm. We had to drive out to the clinic for a dermatome—"

"A which?" breathed the Lieutenant.

"A dermatome. That's a special kind of dermatological instrument—sort of a knife that permits the removal of a thin layer of surface skin as a sample for comparison."

The Lieutenant said wearily, "Yes, but still—"

"Still, we ran into more trouble," said Málek. "The stucco under the window was badly weathered, and it was doubtful whether it could be removed and transported to the laboratory without destroying it. So we called in a couple of bricklayers and they cut a whole section out of the wall and fixed it into a metal frame, in a cement base. We got the frame at the ČKD plant—they welded it for us in the workshop on the spot—and so we took a whole chunk of wall over to the lab."

"So the toilet—"

"So the toilet," laughed the sergeant, "is temporarily out of order. The tavernkeeper tried to give us a hard time about it, but I convinced him that when we're investigating a capital crime all citizens have an obligation towards society—"

"That's true, but of course—"

"—to contribute to the arrest of the murderer. But I must say that, all told, the citizens of the town were much more helpful. You see, in order to confirm my hypothesis, I had to find Semerák's bicycle."

The Lieutenant's forehead was moist. "Did you find it?"

"Not yet," said the sergeant, but with an undertone of supreme con-

fidence. "But the entire local Youth Union organization has joined in the search. And the principal of the grammar school was more than understanding. The youngsters in the diving club are searching the pond." Málek tapped the map. "There are dense reeds on two sides of the pond, and it's up to twelve feet deep in some places, but there's a fellow in a diving suit hunting down there."

Lieutenant Borůvka gave something that faintly resembled a groan. "Listen, Paul, you've got a rare gift for organization, I know that—"

"I know that myself," grinned the sergeant. "I did a real job of organizing things here, didn't it? In the meantime the kids from the grammar school, along with the principal and the teachers, are combing the woods. We'll have that bicycle by nightfall or my name isn't Málek."

"That is, unless—"

"Don't worry," Málek reassured his superior, who once again was beginning to show signs of extreme nervousness. "My hypothesis is okay, just wait and see. And I have other evidence. We found soil and bits of moss on Semerák's shoes. At first glance the soil and moss look the same as the stuff under the toilet window. Semerák insists that the same kind of moss grows on the forest path between B and T, where he claims to have walked—from Bárta's to the tavern.

"So we gathered samples of moss from the tavern, and from about fifteen places on the path where he says he walked. We sent it to the Botanical Institute of the Academy of Sciences. They promised to give us a hand—I spoke to Professor Kavina personally by phone this morning."

There was desperation in Lieutenant Borůvka's glance as it swept the attic again and came to rest on the dead woman's wretched feet. Behind his back, Constable First Class Šinták cleared his throat, and when the two of them turned to face him, they saw that he was now holding a chair in his hand.

"Just a second, Constable. I'll finish giving the Lieutenant the background, and then he'll take a look at the strangulation marks himself," said Málek, and he turned back to Lieutenant Borůvka. "Well, while we were collecting the moss, we looked around for tracks. There were a few places along the path where the ground is moist clay, ideal for imprints, and sure enough, there were the tracks of at least five different bicycles. I had plaster casts taken of all of them. When we find Semerák's bike we'll make comparisons, and that'll be first-class proof. All the tracks were made by old bicycles, with characteristic marks on their tires."

"But—" and that was all the older detective managed to utter when the sergeant took the floor again.

"But, of course, in order to play fair with old Semerák, I had casts made of his shoes as well—I mean, of his footprints—and casts of all the fresh

footprints from the forest path. There's an awful lot of them, but since this is a major crime we have to set aside all economic considerations."

"We wouldn't really have to if—" Lieutenant Borůvka tried to say.

"If that killer hadn't thought things out so cleverly that we're having trouble finding proof conclusive enough to arrest him." Málek was indignant. "But there's no such thing as a perfect crime, and we have the latest scientific methods at our beck and call, and that's a mighty weapon. He can't stand up against modern science. I had them bring in the canine squad on the case too," he added.

"The canine squad," repeated the Lieutenant.

"Yes, Ajax. You know him, don't you? Magnificent beast. A cross between a dog and a wolf. What a set of teeth! I've never seen a more magnificent set of teeth in all my life."

"Yes," replied Lieutenant Borůvka grimly. Ajax's magnificent teeth were not unfamiliar to him. The magnificent beast had attempted to demonstrate his teeth earlier on the Lieutenant's backside when that rotund officer had been rushing from his car to the scene of the crime. It had taken the efforts of two experienced members of the canine squad to calm the beast, who for reasons unknown was excited to a state of ferocity by the Lieutenant's scent.

"We put Ajax on the trail," continued Málek, "and the results point to the B-S-B-T alternative, even though there are some confusions. We'll have to wait for the lab tests to clear them up for us. Look," and Málek unfolded the map again, "on the stretch between B and T the dog lost the scent a little way past Bárta's cabin, and couldn't find it anywhere in the woods either. On the stretch B-S he found it, but he had some trouble. But on the stretch between the tavern and Semerák's house, he had no trouble at all. What does that prove?" He turned to the Lieutenant with his rhetorical question, but this time the latter was silent.

"I can see it now, clear as day," declared Málek with characteristic enthusiasm. "A little way beyond the beekeeper's cabin old Semerák climbed on the bike, rode home to S along the route B-S, twenty minutes later pedaled back along the same stretch and then took the path B-T to the tavern. That means he walked the stretch S-B once when he went to Bárta's at six o'clock and covered it twice by bicycle. All of —" Málek glanced at his wrist watch—"twenty hours have passed since then, and that's why the dog had trouble finding the trail. Semerák took the stretch B-T only once, and by bike, so it's no wonder that the dog couldn't find the trail there. And he did the stretch T-S on foot, and comparatively recently, less than fifteen hours ago. That trail is still fresh, so a dog can latch onto it and follow it easily."

"But you mentioned some discrepancies," ventured Lieutenant Borůvka, and he gave an embarrassed look at Constable Šinták, who was standing almost at attention, with the chair at his feet, and devouring the sergeant's every word. His years of service on the police force had brought the constable a deep respect for superiors.

Lieutenant Borůvka cleared his throat as if to say something more, but Málek started in again.

"It's like this. At the tavern the dog hesitated. He found the trail all right—two trails. One led to the tavern door, and the other under the Men's Room window. Well, that's no contradiction—it just speaks for the T-S-T alternative. The murderer climbed out the window, went for the bike he had left hidden near the road on the stretch T-S, and then at 12:00 he left the tavern by the door and walked home. The only thing that's got me wondering is why the dog couldn't find the scent on the stretch B-T. Unless the murderer hid the bike in the woods near Bárta's cabin, cycled along the stretch B-T, hid it somewhere near the road between S and T so as to have it handy, and waited a while before going into the tavern, so the times would match, and then took the alternative T-S-T."

"Yes," said Lieutenant Borůvka groggily, "all that is possible. Yes, indeed. You really did a lot of work on this case, there's no denying that. But of course—"

"But of course," said Sergeant Málek, pleased, "now you want to look at those strangulation marks. Constable!" He didn't have to say any more. The constable leaped forward with the chair and set it up at the old lady's feet.

Lieutenant Borůvka looked up. Another breeze wafted in through the skylight and blew the hair away from the bluish face.

"Go ahead," urged the sergeant. "We're going to have to take her down anyway. She's been up there too long already."

"I—" began the Lieutenant, when the shaky attic quivered with a deafening roar. All three looked up. Šinták's face showed an expression of respect, Lieutenant Borůvka looked terrified, and Málek smiled with satisfaction.

"Helicopter," he explained, "The major at the army base gave his permission. You know," he turned to the Lieutenant, "from the air you can see right down to the bottom of the pond. A lot of time saved for the divers. Well, any minute now we can expect word that they have found the bicycle."

"I—" Lieutenant Borůvka paused, then added determinedly, "I'm not going to climb up there!"

"I know you believe me," said the sergeant, flattered, "but still—"

"No," the Lieutenant interposed quickly, "that's not it. I believe you, but—I don't have to look. You can go ahead and arrest him," he said mournfully, and added, "for murder."

"Well," smiled Málek, "I'm happy to see that my scientific evidence has convinced you. But I'd just as soon hold off making the arrest until we're absolutely certain—until I have the bike, the fingerprint and lab test results, and the botanical and dermatological reports. You know how touchy the public is about false arrests. So we'll just wait until," and he cleared his throat, "modern science gives us irrefutable proof."

"I don't need proof," Borůvka said. "I *know* he murdered her." He turned to Constable Šinták. "Would you please go downstairs and have them bring Semerák up here?"

That is how it happened that Constable Šinták didn't hear what Lieutenant Borůvka said to the sergeant. And that is why nobody will ever convince the constable that Borůvka's certainty as to the murderer was anything but a product of his strange and supernatural prowess.

And for that matter, no one ever found out what the Lieutenant told the sergeant that afternoon in the dingy attic under the body of the murdered old woman. Lieutenant Borůvka was a soft-hearted soul, and, whenever possible, he preferred to conceal circumstances that would cast aspersions on the detective abilities of his colleagues.

Two things are certain, however: one is the inexpressible sadness on Lieutenant Borůvka's face when Constable Šinták returned to the attic with Semerák, and the other is that Sergeant Málek was as red as a cooked lobster. Šinták didn't know why. He didn't because he hadn't heard the two questions the Lieutenant had asked the young sergeant during the constable's absence.

The first one was: "You didn't move a thing—everything is exactly the way you found it?"

And when the sergeant had looked around that bleak attic, in the middle of which, about a yard above the floor and directly over that single sad, deserted slipper, hung the frail old woman, and when he had replied in the affirmative—that everything was exactly the way they found it, that not a thing had been touched—then the older detective asked, "Then tell me, Paul, how did she get up there all by herself?"

And with a pudgy finger he pointed to the old attic beam overhead, and then, without another word, at the three-foot distance between the old woman's feet and the desolate floor, where the breeze was worrying a few shreds of old newspapers and tiny wisps of dust.

Hernando Téllez was born and educated in Bogota, Colombia. He has been on the staffs of Colombia's best-known newspapers and magazines, and in 1950 he published a book of tragicomic short stories titled CENIZAS AL VIENTO. *Téllez has been described as a "keen, sensitive observer of contemporary life in his native country."*

"Enemy in His Hands" reveals the author's deep sense of irony and anguish—a curious and curiously moving combination. It is a tale of what Spanish-Americans call machismo . . .

ENEMY IN HIS HANDS

by HERNANDO TÉLLEZ

(translated by Donald A. Yates)

HE SAID NOTHING WHEN HE ENTERED. I was passing the best of my razors back and forth on a strop. When I recognized him I started to tremble. But he didn't notice. Hoping to conceal my emotion, I continued sharpening the razor. I tested it on the meat of my thumb, and then held it up to the light.

At that moment he took off the bullet-studded belt that his gun holster dangled from. He hung it up on a wall hook and placed his military cap over it. Then he turned to me, loosening the knot of his tie, and said, "It's hot as hell. Give me a shave." He sat in the chair.

I estimated he had a four-day beard—the four days taken up by the latest expedition in search of our troops. His face seemed reddened, burned by the sun. Carefully, I began to prepare the soap. I cut off a few slices, dropped them into the cup, mixed in a bit of warm water, and began to stir with the brush. Immediately the foam began to rise. "The other boys in the group should have this much beard, too." I continued stirring the lather.

"But we did all right, you know. We got the main ones. We brought back some dead, and we got some others still alive. But pretty soon they'll all be dead."

"How many did you catch?" I asked.

"Fourteen. We had to go pretty deep into the woods to find them. But we'll get even. Not one of them comes out of this alive, not one."

He leaned back on the chair when

Copyright 1962 by Dell Publishing Co.; originally titled, "Just Lather, That's All."

he saw me with the lather-covered brush in my hand. I still had to put the sheet on him. No doubt about it, I was upset. I took a sheet out of a drawer and knotted it around his neck. He wouldn't stop talking. He probably thought I was in sympathy with his party.

"The town must have learned a lesson from what we did", he said.

"Yes," I replied, securing the knot at the base of his dark, sweaty neck.

"That was a fine show, eh?"

"Very good," I answered, turning back for the brush.

The man closed his eyes with a gesture of fatigue and sat waiting for the cool caress of the soap. I had never had him so close to me. The day he ordered the whole town to file into the patio of the school to see the four rebels hanging there, I came face to face with him for an instant. But the sight of the mutilated bodies kept me from noticing the face of the man who had directed it all, the face I was now about to take into my hands.

It was not an unpleasant face, and the beard, which made him look a bit older than he was, didn't suit him badly at all. His name was Torres—Captain Torres. A man of imagination, because who else would have thought of hanging the naked rebels and then holding target practice on their bodies?

I began to apply the first layer of soap. With his eyes closed, he continued. "Without any effort I could go straight to sleep," he said, "but there's plenty to do this afternoon."

I stopped the lathering and asked with a feigned lack of interest, "A firing squad?"

"Something like that, but a little slower."

I got on with the job of lathering his beard. My hands started trembling again. The man could not possibly realize it, and this was in my favor. But I would have preferred that he hadn't come. It was likely that many of our faction had seen him enter. And an enemy under one's roof imposes certain conditions.

I would be obliged to shave that beard like any other one, carefully, gently, like that of any customer, taking pains to see that no single pore emitted a drop of blood. Being careful to see that the little tufts of hair did not lead the blade astray. Seeing that his skin ended up clean, soft, and healthy, so that passing the back of my hand over it I couldn't feel a hair. Yes, I was secretly a rebel, but I was also a conscientious barber, and proud of the preciseness of my profession.

I took the razor, opened up the two protective arms, exposed the blade, and began the job—from one of the sideburns downward. The razor responded beautifully. His beard was inflexible and hard, not too long, but thick. Bit by bit the skin emerged. The razor rasped along, making its customary sound as fluffs of lather mixed with bits of hair gathered along the blade.

I paused a moment to clean it, then took up the strop again to sharpen the razor, because I'm a barber who does things properly. The man, who had kept his eyes closed, opened them now, removed one of his hands from under the sheet, felt the spot on his face where the soap had been cleared off, and said, "Come to the school today at six o'clock."

"The same thing as the other day?" I asked horrified.

"It could be even better," he said.

"What do you plan to do?"

"I don't know yet. But we'll amuse ourselves." Once more he leaned back and closed his eyes. I approached with the razor poised.

"Do you plan to punish them all?" I ventured timidly.

"All."

The soap was drying on his face. I had to hurry. In the mirror I looked toward the street. It was the same as ever—the grocery store with two or three customers in it. Then I glanced at the clock—2:20 in the afternoon.

The razor continued on its downward stroke. Now from the other sideburn down. A thick, blue beard. He should have let it grow like some poets or priests do. It would suit him well. A lot of people wouldn't recognize him. Much to his benefit, I thought, as I attempted to cover the neck area smoothly.

There, surely, the razor had to be handled masterfully, since the hair, although softer, grew into little swirls. A curly beard. One of the tiny pores could open up and issue forth its pearl of blood, but a good barber prides himself on never allowing this to happen to a customer. And this was a first-class customer.

How many of us had he ordered shot? How many of us had he ordered mutilated? It was better not to think about it. Torres did not know that I was his enemy. He did not know it nor did the rest. It was a secret shared by very few, precisely so that I could inform the revolutionaries of what Torres was doing in the town and of what he was planning each time he undertook a rebel-hunting excursion.

So it was going to be very difficult to explain that I had him right in my hands and let him go peacefully —alive and shaved.

The beard was now almost completely gone. He seemed younger, less burdened by years than when he had arrived. I suppose this always happens with men who visit barber shops. Under the stroke of my razor Torres was being rejuvenated—rejuvenated because I am a good barber, the best in the town, if I may say so.

How hot it is getting! Torres must be sweating as much as I. But he is a calm man, who is not even thinking about what he is going to do with the prisoners this afternoon. On the other hand I, with this razor in my hands—I stroking and restroking this skin, can't even think clearly.

Damn him for coming! I'm a revolutionary, not a murderer. And how easy it would be to kill him. And he deserves it. Does he? No! What the devil! No one deserves to have someone else make the sacrifice of becoming a murderer. What do you gain by it? Nothing. Others come along and still others, and the first ones kill the second ones, and they the next ones—and it goes on like this until everything is a sea of blood.

I could cut this throat just so—*zip, zip!* I wouldn't give him time to resist and since he has his eyes closed he wouldn't see the glistening blade or my glistening eyes. But I'm trembling like a real murderer. Out of his neck a gush of blood would spout onto the sheet, on the chair, on my hands, on the floor. I would have to close the door. And the blood would keep inching along the floor, warm, ineradicable, uncontainable, until it reached the street, like a little scarlet stream.

I'm sure that one solid stroke, one deep incision, would prevent any pain. He wouldn't suffer. But what would I do with the body? Where would I hide it? I would have to flee, leaving all I have behind, and take refuge far away. But they would follow until they found me. "Captain Torres' murderer. He slit his throat while he was shaving him—a coward."

And then on the other side. "The avenger of us all. A name to remember. He was the town barber. No one knew he was defending our cause."

Murderer or hero? My destiny depends on the edge of this blade. I can turn my hand a bit more, press a little harder on the razor, and sink it in. The skin would give way like silk, like rubber. There is nothing more tender than human skin and the blood is always there, ready to pour forth.

But I don't want to be a murderer. You came to me for a shave. And I perform my work honorably . . . I don't want blood on my hands. Just lather, that's all. You are an executioner and I am only a barber. Each person has his own place in the scheme of things.

Now his chin had been stroked clean and smooth. The man sat up and looked into the mirror. He rubbed his hands over his skin and felt it fresh, like new.

"Thanks," he said. He went to the hanger for his belt, pistol, and cap. I must have been very pale; my shirt felt soaked. Torres finished adjusting the buckle, straightened his pistol in the holster, and after automatically smoothing down his hair, he put on the cap. From his pants pocket he took out several coins to pay me for my services and then headed for the door.

In the doorway he paused for a moment and said, "They told me that you'd kill me. I came to find out. But killing isn't easy. You can take my word for it." And he turned and walked away.

a *NEW* Inspector Maigret story by
GEORGES SIMENON

first publication in the United States

One of the very best short stories about Inspector Maigret—the patient, pipe-smoking, bowler-hatted Maigret, surly as a bear, peevish and resentful, but with a heart as big as Paris itself—Maigret on a 5-day, 5-night chase through the streets, bistros, newsreel theaters, restaurants, subways, and cheap hotels of Paris, on a case without a clue, without a shred of evidence, a case that would long be talked about at Headquarters as a classic, as one of the most "characteristically Maigret" . . .

INSPECTOR MAIGRET PURSUES

by GEORGES SIMENON

THE FOUR MEN WERE PACKED IN THE TAXI. IT WAS FREEZING ALL OVER Paris. At half-past seven in the morning the city looked wan; the wind was whipping the powdery frost along the ground. The thinnest of the four men, on one of the flap seats, had a cigarette stuck to his lower lip and handcuffs on his wrists. The most important one, clothed in a thick overcoat, heavy-jawed, a bowler hat on his head, was smoking his pipe and watching the railings of the Bois de Boulogne file past.

"You want me to put on a big dramatic scene?" the handcuffed man suggested politely. "With struggling, frothing at the mouth, insults, and all?"

Taking the cigarette from between the man's lips and opening the door, for they had arrived at the Porte de Bagatelle, Inspector Maigret growled, "Don't overdo it."

The pathways in the Bois were deserted, white as limestone, and as hard. A dozen or so people were standing around at the corner of a bridle path, and a photographer prepared to go into action on the group as it approached.

But, as instructed, P'tit Louis raised his arms in front of his face.

Maigret, looking surly, swung his head from side to side like a bear, taking everything in—the new blocks of flats on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace, their shutters still closed, a few workmen on bikes coming from

Copyright © 1961 by Georges Simenon.

Puteaux, a lighted tram, two concierges approaching, their hands blue with cold.

"Is this it?" he asked.

The day before he had arranged for the following information to appear in the newspapers:

BAGATELLE MURDER

This time the police will not have been long in clearing up an affair that looked as if it presented insurmountable difficulties. It will be remembered that on Monday morning a park-keeper in the Bois de Boulogne discovered along one of the pathways a hundred yards or so from the Porte de Bagatelle a corpse it was possible to identify on the spot.

It was Ernest Borms, a well-known Viennese doctor who had been in practice in Neuilly for several years. Borms was wearing evening clothes. He must have been attacked during the night of Sunday/Monday, while returning to his flat on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace.

A bullet fired at point-blank range from a small-caliber revolver struck him full in the heart.

Borms, still young and handsome and well turned-out, led a fairly social life.

Scarcely forty-eight hours after the murder Police Headquarters have just made an arrest. Tomorrow morning, between seven and eight o'clock, the man concerned will be conducted to the scene for the purpose of a reconstruction of the crime.

As things turned out, this case was to be referred to at Headquarters as the one perhaps most characteristically Maigret; but when they spoke of it in his hearing, he had a curious way of turning his head away with a groan.

To proceed, everything was ready. Hardly any gaping onlookers, as planned. It was not for nothing that Maigret had chosen this early hour of the morning. Moreover, among the ten or twelve people who were hanging about, could be spotted some plainclothesmen wearing their most innocent air. One of them, Torrence, who loved disguises, was dressed as a milkman. At the sight of him his chief shrugged eloquently. If only P'tit Louis didn't overact. An old customer of theirs who had been picked up the day before for picking pockets in the Métro . . .

"You give us a hand tomorrow morning and we'll see that we aren't too hard on you this time . . ." They had fetched him up from the cells.

"Now, then," growled Maigret, "when you heard the footsteps you were hiding in this corner here, weren't you?"

"As you say, Chief Inspector. I was famished. Stony broke . . . I said to myself, a gent on his way home all dressed up like that must be carrying a walletful. 'Your money or your life!' was what I whispered right into his ear. And I swear it wasn't my fault that the thing went off. I'm quite sure it was the cold made me squeeze the trigger."

11 a.m. Maigret was pacing round his office at Headquarters, smoking solidly and constantly fiddling with the phone.

"Is that you, Chief? Lucas here. I followed the old man who seemed so interested in the reconstruction. Nothing doing there—he's just a lunatic who takes a stroll every morning in the Bois."

"All right, you can come back."

11.15 a.m. "Hullo, is that you, Chief? Torrence. I shadowed the young man you tipped me the wink on. He always hangs round when the plain-clothes boys are called in. He's an assistant in a shop on the Champs Elysées. Shall I come back?"

From Janvier no call till five to twelve.

"I've got to be quick, Chief. I'm afraid he'll give me the slip. I'm keeping an eye on him in the mirror of the booth. I'm at the Yellow Dwarf Bar, Boulevard Rochechouart . . . Yes, he spotted me. He's got something on his mind. Crossing the Seine, he threw something in the river. He's tried over and over to shake me off. Will you be coming?"

So began a chase that was to last five days and nights. Among the hurrying crowds, across an unsuspecting Paris, from bar to bar, bistro to bistro, a lone man on the one hand, and on the other Maigret and his detectives, taking it in turn and, in the long run, just as harassed as the man they were following.

Maigret got out of his taxi opposite the Yellow Dwarf at the busy time just before lunch, and found Janvier leaning on the bar. He wasn't troubling to put on any façade of innocence. Quite the opposite.

"Which one is it?"

The detective motioned with his jaw toward a man sitting in the corner at a small table. The man was watching them; his eyes, which were a light blue-gray, gave a foreign cast to his face. Nordic? Slav? More likely a Slav. He was wearing a gray overcoat, a well-cut suit, a soft felt hat. About thirty-five years old, so far as one could judge. He was pale, close-shaven.

"What're you having, Chief? A hot toddy?"

"Toddy let it be. What's *he* drinking?"

"Brandy. It's his fifth this morning. You mustn't mind if I sound slurred, but I've had to follow him round all the bistros. He's tough, you know. Look at him—it's been like that all morning. He wouldn't lower his eyes for all the kingdoms of the earth."

It was true. And it was strange. You couldn't call it arrogance or defiance. The man was just looking at them. If he felt any anxiety, it was concealed. It was sadness rather that his face expressed, but a calm, reflective sadness.

"At Bagatelle, when he noticed you were watching him, he went off straight away and I fell into step behind him. He hadn't gone a hundred yards before he turned round. Then, instead of leaving the Bois, as he apparently meant to do, he strode off down the first path he came to. He turned round again. He recognized me. He sat down on a bench, despite the cold, and I stopped. More than once I had the impression he wanted to speak to me, but in the end he only shrugged and set off again.

"At the Porte Dauphine I almost lost him. He jumped into a taxi and it was just luck that I found one almost immediately. He got out at the Place de l'Opéra, and rushed into the Métro. One behind the other, we changed trains five times before he began to realize he wouldn't shake me off that way . . .

"We went up again into the street. We were at Place Clichy. Since then we have been going from bar to bar. I was waiting for one with a telephone booth where I could keep him in sight. When he saw me phoning, he gave a bitter little laugh. Honestly, you'd have sworn after that he was waiting for you."

"Ring up H.Q. Lucas and Torrence are to hold themselves ready to join me as soon as they're called. And a photographer, too, from the technical branch, with a miniature camera."

"Waiter!" the man called out. "What do I owe you?"

"Three-fifty."

"I bet he's a Pole," Maigret breathed to Janvier. "On our way . . ."

They didn't get far. At Place Blanche they followed the man into a restaurant, sat down at the next table. It was an Italian place, and they ate pasta.

At three, Lucas came to take over from Janvier, who was with Maigret at a *brasserie* opposite the Gare du Nord.

"The photographer?" Maigret asked.

"He's waiting outside to get him as he leaves."

And sure enough, when the Pole left the place, having finished reading the papers, a detective hurried up. At less than three feet he took a shot of him. The man raised his hand quickly to his face, but it was already too

late. Then, proving that he knew what was going on, he cast a reproachful look to Maigret.

Aha, my little man, Maigret said to himself, you have some good reason for not revealing where you live. Well, you may be patient, but so am I.

By evening a few snowflakes were fluttering down in the street, the stranger walked on, hands in pockets, waiting for bedtime.

"I'll take over for the night, Chief?" Lucas suggested.

"No. I'd rather you coped with the photograph. Look at the hotel registrations first. Then see what you can find out in the foreign quarters. That fellow knows his Paris. He didn't arrive yesterday. There must be people who know him."

"How about putting his picture in the papers?"

Maigret eyed his subordinate with scorn. How could Lucas, who had been working with him for so many years, fail to understand? Had the police one single clue? Nothing. Not one piece of evidence. A man killed during the night in the Bois de Boulogne. No weapon is found. No prints. Dr. Borms lives alone, and his only servant doesn't know where he spent the previous evening. "Do as I say. Get going . . ."

Finally at midnight the man decides to go into a hotel. Maigret follows him in. It is a second- or even third-class hotel.

"I want a room."

"Will you register here, please?"

He registers hesitantly, his fingers stiff with cold. He looks Maigret up and down as if to say, "If you think that's any problem—I can write any name that comes."

And, in fact, he has done so. Nicolas Slaatkovitch, resident of Cracow, arrived the day before in Paris. It is all false, obviously.

Maigret telephones to Headquarters. They hunt through the files of furnished lodgings, the registers of foreigners, they get in touch with the frontier posts. No Nicolas Slaatkovitch.

"And a room for you?" the proprietor asks with distaste, for he senses the presence of a policeman.

"No, thank you. I'll spend the night on the stairs."

It's safer that way. He sits down on a step in front of the door of Room 7. Twice the door opens. The man peers through the gloom, makes out Maigret's silhouette, and ends up by going to bed. In the morning his face is rough with stubble. He hasn't been able to change his shirt. He hasn't even got a comb, and his hair is rumpled.

Lucas has just arrived. "I'll do the next shift, Chief?"

Maigret refuses to leave his stranger. He has watched him pay the bill. He has seen him grow pale. He guesses his thoughts . . .

And a little later, in a bar where, almost side by side, they are breakfasting on white coffee and croissants, the man openly counts up his fortune. One hundred-franc note, two twenty-franc pieces, one of ten, and some small change. He makes a bitter grimace.

Well, he won't get far on that. When he arrived at the Bois de Boulogne, he had come straight from home, for he was freshly shaved, not a speck of dust, not a crease in his clothes. He hadn't even looked to see how much money he had on him.

What he threw in the Seine, Maigret guesses, were his identification papers, perhaps visiting cards. At all costs he wants to prevent their finding out his address.

And so the round of the homeless begins again: the loitering in front of shops or round street traders, the bars one has to go into from time to time, even if it's only to sit down, especially when it's cold outside, the papers one reads in the *brasseries* . . .

One hundred and fifty francs. No more lunchtime restaurant. The man makes do with hard-boiled eggs, which he eats, along with his pint, standing up at the bar counter, while Maigret gulps down sandwiches.

For a long time the man has been thinking about going into a movie, his hand fingering the small change in his pocket. Better to stick it out. He walks . . . and walks . . .

There is, incidentally, one detail that strikes Maigret. It is always in the same districts that this exhausting stroll takes place: from the Trinité to Place Clichy, from Place Clichy to Barbès, by way of Rue Caulaincourt . . . from Barbès to the Gare du Nord and Rue Lafayette. Besides, the man's afraid of being recognized, isn't he? Of course he's chosen the districts farthest from his home or hotel, those he didn't usually frequent . . .

Does he, like many foreigners, haunt Montparnasse? The parts around the Panthéon?

His clothes indicate he is reasonably well off. They are comfortable, sober, and well cut. A professional man, no doubt. What's more, he wears a ring, so he's married.

Maigret has had to agree to hand over to Torrence, and has dashed home. Madame Maigret is displeased: her sister has come up from Orléans, she has taken a lot of trouble over the dinner, and her husband, after a shave and a change of clothes, is already off again, and doesn't know when he'll be back.

He drives off to the Quai des Orfèvres. "Lucas hasn't left anything for me?"

Yes, he has. There's a note from the sergeant. He's been round several of the Polish and Russian quarters showing the photograph. Nobody knows

the man. Nothing from the political circles, either. As a last resource he has had a large number of copies made of the photograph, and police are now going from door to door in all the districts of Paris, from concierge to concierge, showing the document to bar owners and waiters.

"Hullo, is that Chief Inspector Maigret? This is one of the usherettes at the newsreel theater on the Boulevard de Strasbourg. It's a gentleman—Monsieur Torrence. He's asked me to call you to say he's here, but he didn't want to leave his place in the theater."

Not so stupid, on the stranger's part. He has worked out that it's the best heated place to pass a few hours cheaply—two francs to get in, and you can see the program several times.

A curious intimacy has sprung up between follower and followed, between the man, whose face is now dark with stubble and whose clothes are crumpled, and Maigret, who never for a moment stops trailing him. There is even one rather comic point: they've both caught colds. Their noses are red; they pull out their handkerchiefs almost in time with one another. Once, in spite of himself, the stranger had to smile as he saw Maigret going off into a series of sneezes.

After five consecutive newsreel programs, a dirty hotel on the Boulevard de la Chapelle. Same name on the register. And again Maigret installs himself on the stairs. But as this is a hotel with a casual trade, he is disturbed every ten minutes by couples going up and down; they stare at him curiously, and the women don't find him a reassuring sight.

When he's at the end of his tether, or at the breaking point, will the man decide to go home? In one of the *brasseries,* where he stays long enough to take off his gray coat, Maigret without more ado seizes the garment and looks inside the collar. The coat comes from Old England, the shop on the Boulevard des Italiens. It is a ready-made coat, and the shop must have sold dozens of others like it. One clue, however: it is last year's model, so the stranger has been in Paris for a year at least. And in a year he must have found somewhere to hang out . . .

Maigret has started drinking grog to cure his cold. The other now pays out his money drop by drop. He drinks his coffee straight; he lives on croissants and hard-boiled eggs.

The news from the office is always the same: nothing to report. Nobody recognizes the photograph of the Pole. No one has heard of any missing person.

As to the dead man, nothing there, either. A good practice, he made a lot of money, wasn't interested in politics, went out a lot, and, as he dealt with nervous diseases, most of his patients were women.

There was one experiment Maigret had not yet had the chance of seeing

through to the end: how long it would take for a well-bred, well-cared-for, well-dressed man to lose his outward polish.

Four days. As he now knew. To begin with, the unshavenness. The first morning the man looked like a lawyer, or a doctor, or an architect, or a businessman; you could picture him leaving his cosy flat. A four-day growth transformed him to such an extent that if one had now put his pictures in the papers and referred to the Bois de Boulogne affair, everyone would have said, "You can see he's a murderer."

The bitter weather and lack of sleep had reddened his eyelids, and his cheeks were feverish from his cold. His shoes, which were no longer polished, seemed to have lost their shape. His coat weighed on him, and his trousers were baggy round the knees.

Even his walk was no longer the same. He sidled along the wall, he lowered his eyes when people looked at him. Another thing: he turned his head away when he passed a restaurant where one could see people sitting down to large meals . . .

"Your last twenty francs," Maigret worked out, "poor wretch. What now?"

Lucas, Torrence, and Janvier took over from him from time to time, but he left his post as little as possible. He would burst into the Quai des Orfèvres, would see his Chief.

"You'd be well advised to take a rest, Maigret."

It was a peevish Maigret, touchy as if he were torn between contradictory emotions. "Am I or am I not supposed to be finding the murderer?"

"Of course."

"Well then, back to my post." As if resentfully, he would sigh. "I wonder where we'll sleep tonight."

Only twenty francs left. Not even that—when he got back, Torrence said the man had eaten three hard-boiled eggs and drunk two rum coffees in a bar on the corner of the Rue Montmartre.

"Eight francs fifty. That leaves eleven francs fifty."

Maigret admired him. Far from hiding himself, Maigret now tailed him quite openly, sometimes walking right next to him, and he had some difficulty to refrain from speaking to him. "Come now, don't you think it's time to have a proper meal? Somewhere there's a warm home where you're expected. A bed, slippers, a razor. Eh? And a good dinner."

But the man continued to prowl under the arc lamps of Les Halles, like one who no longer knows where to turn. In and out among the heaps of cabbages and carrots, stepping out of the way at the whistle of the train or when the farmers' trucks passed.

"Hasn't even the price of a hotel room."

That evening the National Meteorological Office registered a temperature of eight degrees below zero. The man treated himself to hot sausages from a stall in the streets. Now he would reek of garlic and fat the whole night through.

Once he tried to slip into a shelter and stretch out in the corner. A policeman, whom Maigret wasn't able to stop in time, moved him on. He was hobbling now. Along the quais. The Pont des Arts. As long as he didn't take it into his head to throw himself into the Seine. Maigret didn't feel he had the courage to jump in after him into the black water that was beginning to fill with drift ice.

The man was walking along the towpath level, where the tramps lay grumbling and, under the bridges, all the good places were taken.

In a small street close to the Place Maubert, through the windows of a strange bistro, old men could be seen sleeping with their heads on the tables. Twenty sous, wine included. The man stared in through the gloom. Then, with a fatalistic shrug, he pushed open the door.

Before it closed behind him, Maigret had time to be sickened by the smelly gust that struck him in the face. He preferred to stay outside. He called a policeman, posted him in his place on the pavement while he went to telephone Lucas to take over for the night.

"I've been trying to get you for the last hour, Chief. We've found him! Thanks to a concierge. The fellow's called Stefan Strevzki, an architect, thirty-four years old, born in Warsaw, been in France for three years. Works for a firm in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Married to a Hungarian, a magnificent creature named Dora. Living at Passy, Rue de la Pompe, in a twelve-thousand-franc flat. No political interests. The concierge has never seen the dead man. Stefan left the house earlier than usual on Monday morning. She was surprised not to see him return, but she wasn't worried, having ascertained—"

"What time is it?"

"Half-past three. I'm alone at Headquarters. I've had some beer brought up, but it's too cold."

"Listen, Lucas, you're going—yes, I know, too late for the morning ones. But the evening ones . . . understand?"

That morning the man's clothing gave off a muffled odor of poverty. His eyes were sunken. The look he cast at Maigret in the pale morning contained the deepest pathos and reproach.

Had he not been driven, little by little, but for all that at a dizzy pace, to the very lowest depths? He turned up the collar of his overcoat. He didn't leave the neighborhood, but he rushed into a bistro that had just

opened and downed four quick drinks, as if to rid himself of the appalling aftertaste the night had left in his throat and chest.

So much the worse for him. From now on he no longer had anything. Nothing was left for him but to walk up and down the streets the frost was making slippery. He must be stiff all over. He was limping with his left leg. From time to time he stopped and looked around despairingly. .

As soon as he stopped going into cafés where there was a telephone, Maigret could no longer summon a relief. Back again along the quais. Then that mechanical gesture of flipping through the book bargains, turning the pages, pausing to check the authenticity of an engraving or a print.

A freezing wind was sweeping across the Seine. The water tinkled as the barges moved through it, as tiny fragments of ice glittered and jostled against one another. From a distance Maigret caught sight of the windows of his own office. His sister-in-law had gone back to Orléans. As long as Lucas had . . .

He didn't know yet that this dreadful trail was to become a classic, and that for years the older generation of detectives would recount the details to new colleagues. The silliest thing about it all was that it was a ridiculous detail that upset him most: the man had a pimple on his forehead, a pimple that, on close inspection, turned out to be a boil, which was changing from red to purple.

As long as Lucas . . .

At midday the man, who certainly knew his Paris, made for the free soup kitchen that is situated at the end of the Boulevard Saint-Germain. He took his place in the queue of down-and-outers. An old man spoke to him, but he pretended not to understand. Then another, with a pock-marked face, spoke to him in Russian.

Maigret crossed over to the opposite pavement, and paused. When he was driven to have sandwiches in a bistro, he half turned so that the other should not see him eating them through the windows.

The poor wretches moved forward slowly, went in, four or maybe six at a time, to the room where bowls of hot soup were being served. The queue grew longer. From time to time there was a shove from the back, which aroused protests from some of the others.

One o'clock. A newsboy appeared at the far end of the street; he was running, his body sloping forward. "*L'Intransigeant!* Get your *Intran*—" He, too, was in a hurry to get there before the others. He could tell his customers from far off, and he paid no attention to the queue of down-and-outers. "Get your—"

"Pst!" Timidly, the man raised his hand to attract the boy's attention. The others stared at him. So he had still a few sous left to spend on a paper?

Maigret, too, summoned the boy, unfolded the paper, and, to his relief, found what he was looking for—the photograph of a beautiful young woman smiling out of the front page.

STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE

A young Polish woman, Madame Dora Strevzki, who disappeared four days ago from her home in Passy, 17 Rue de la Pompe, has now been reported missing. Her husband, Monsieur Stefan Strevzki, has also been missing from his home since the previous day—i.e., Monday—and the concierge, who reported the disappearance to the police, states . . .

The man had only five or six yards more to go in the queue before he could claim his bowl of steaming soup, when he left his place in the line and was almost run over by a bus. He reached the opposite pavement just as Maigret drew level.

"I'm ready," he said simply. "Take me away. I'll answer all your questions . . ."

They were all standing in the corridor of Headquarters—Lucas, Janvier, Torrence, and others who had not been in on the case but knew about it. As they passed, Lucas made a triumphant signal to Maigret.

A door opened and shut. Beer and sandwiches on the table.

"Take something to eat first."

Not so easy. Mouthfuls stuck in his throat. Then, at last, "Now that she's gone and is somewhere safe . . ."

Maigret couldn't face him: he had to turn away and poke the stove.

"When I read the accounts of the murder in the papers I had already suspected Dora of deceiving me with that man. I knew, too, she wasn't his only mistress. Knowing Dora and her impetuous nature . . . You understand? If he wanted to get rid of her, I knew she was capable of . . . And she always carried an ivory-handled gun in her handbag. When the papers reported that an arrest had been made and there was to be a reconstruction of the crime, I wanted to see . . ."

Maigret would have liked to be able to say to him, as the British police do, "I must warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

He had kept his coat on and he was still wearing his hat. "Now that she's safe . . . For I suppose . . ." He looked about him anxiously. A suspicion crossed his mind.

"She must have understood when I didn't come home. I knew it would

end like that—that Borms wasn't the man for her, that she wouldn't accept the role of a mere plaything, and that she'd come back to me. She went out alone that Sunday evening, as she had been doing recently. She must have killed him then."

Maigret blew his nose. He took a long time over it. A ray of sunlight—the harsh winter sunlight that goes with sharp frost—came in the window. The pimple or boil gleamed on the forehead of the man—as Maigret found he had to go on calling him.

"So your wife killed him. When she found out he had never really cared for her. And you, you realized she had done it. And you didn't want . . ."

He suddenly went up to the Pole. "I'm sorry, old man," he grunted, as if he was talking to an old friend. "I had to find out the truth, hadn't I? It was my duty."

Then he opened the door. "Bring in Madame Dora Strevzki. Lucas, you carry on. I—"

And for the next two days nobody saw him again at Headquarters. His chief telephoned him at home. "Well now, Maigret. You know she's confessed, and—by the way, how's your cold? They tell me—"

"It's nothing, Chief. It's getting better. Another day. How is he?"

"What? Who?"

"He—the man."

"Oh, I see. He's got hold of the best lawyer in Paris. He has hopes—you know, *crimes passionnels* . . ."

Maigret went back to bed and sank into a grog-and-aspirin stupor. When, later on, he was asked about the investigation, his grumbled "What investigation?" was enough to discourage further questions.

As for the man, he came to see him once or twice a week, and kept him informed of the hopes the defense were holding out.

It wasn't a straightforward acquittal: one year's imprisonment, with sentence suspended.

And the man—it was he who taught Maigret to play chess.

Mrs. Mary Doble wrote to us that she noticed we "seem to have a soft spot for old W.S.," so maybe her enclosed story would appeal to us, "though by no stretch of the imagination could it be called a crime story." Well, now . . . it certainly isn't a crime story in the usual sense; but by stretching the imagination—yes, there are at least hints and implications of crime . . .

The author, M. Patricia Doble, is in her thirties, was born in Ireland, brought up in England, and is now living in South Africa. She is a "housewife/gardener/paper-hanger/ceiling-whitener/et cetera." She started writing by accident. "Having read a story I considered particularly feeble, I made the mistake of remarking I could write better with my eyes closed and was immediately challenged by my husband to prove it. Well, it would be nice to say the story I wrote was received with open arms. In actual fact it came bouncing back by return post as did the next three. However, that stubborn Irish streak in me came to the fore. That was five years ago."

Since then Mrs. Doble has sold stories, quite a few, in South Africa and in England, and has had three chosen for an anthology.

Here is Mrs. Doble's first story to appear in the United States, and while it is not exactly EQMM's "cup of tea," all our readers liked the story, especially the contrast between fantasy and realism—the fantasy of plot and the realism of style . . .

THE QUEAR GEST

by M. PATRICIA DOBLE

"Marlin Oaks,"
Windlesham Road,
Chobham, Surrey
26th February 1966

Dear Annie,

You will worry yourself at me writing like this out of turn and you will think I am sick or won the football pools. I am not sick, leastways not in the body, but its funny I writ that bit about winning the pools without

thinking because I did have a win and I nearly had a heart attack when the letter came 'til I saw how much, eleven shillings.

It is not about the pools I am writing though, but because I want your advice on another matter because you always had your nose stuck in a book when we was young, and the nuns edicated you better than the ones of us that went down the road to school when we were not working in the fields. I dont want you to read this in a hurry like when you are having your tea and sangwiches with the girls at the factory because I would be greatful if you read it at home in your digs and tell me what you think. It hapened Monday.

I told you before about the quear people comes down from London to visit Miss Norma nearly every week end, so I never thought much when I went into the kitchen to make the early tea and start the brekfast and saw this fellow sitting up on the kitchen table singing to himself, and he all dressed up in a fancy-dress suit with a high frilley thing standing up round his neck and a wig that had curls coming down to his sholders. You slept the night in that costume me lad, I said to myself or why else would you be rigged out in it at this hour of the morning.

Then I took a closer look at him and I saw that he was horid pale with big dark rings under his eyes and I knew that he never slept the night at all nor many a night this long time, and another thing I could see was that he was older than the other ones comes down because he was very bald in the front even with the wig. But I never let on I saw anything wrong with him at all but bid him a friendly good morning and put the kettle on.

Well Annie you would think I had put an electricity shock under him the way he shot off the table. You can see me, he shouted at the top of his voice, and he carried on something awful 'til I thought Miss Norma and all the others would come running, and I would be a liar if I said I was not afraid.

Is he mad or what I asked myself, and there he was going on and on with the kind of talk you hear from the wireless when they read plays, not that I ever listen. Well, if he doesnt get me up in a corner and the blood inside me like ice with fright and me trying to look like I was taking no notice of him at all, and he between me and the two doors out of the kitchen.

Since sixteen sixteen I have been walking this cursed earth says he, and no body able to see even the faintest shadow of me or hear a word I uttered 'til yourself, wench. Well, says I bold like, if you've been out since sixteen sixteen you should know the way the rest of us talks because I havent understood more than a few words what with all the forsooths

and thous and thees, and he laughed at that and said I was right and after that he talked the same as you and me and he didnt sound half as cracked, but you could see it was hard for him.

Well I said, will you be so kind as to move away and let me get to the fridge for the bacon. Thats exactly what I said Annie, but you would have thought I said a curse at the rage that come over him. Dont mention bacon to me, he shouted and he all shaking with temper. Bacon he says, is one of the retches people are saying wrote my things. He said a lot more rubbitch and tried to get me to promise I would tell people he writ dramas and sonets whatever they are and me nearly fainting now thinking he was a madman. Then he went quiet.

After a minute he said I can see you think I am just a mortal play acting or gone mad, and he held out his hand. If youll just shake hands with me says he you will find I am not from this world at all.

Well me knees nearly gave under me but I didnt let on that I knew he was off his rocker. Listen I said if you lay a finger on me Ill shout for Miss Norma and disgrace you in front of the other gests, and you wont believe me Annie, but he started to cry like a child. Sobbed his heart out and me own breaking in two listening to him. All right I said. What do you want of me. Stopped crying on the turn he did.

Have you ever heard of a man called Shakespeer he asked me. I said he didnt live in these parts and that made him laugh fit to bust. Then he said that was his own name only people spells it wrong. Listen he said, what I want of you is this. I want you to tell people it was all my own work. Not a line was writ by bacon or rally or marlo or anyone else.

I know it sounds like rubbitch Annie, but thats exacktly what he said and he made me say it after him a few times. He put his whole life he said into making up beutiful works and now that he is dead and gone people say others writ it all and thats why he cant rest in peece.

Well Annie you wont want to believe me but I knew for sure now he wasnt a madman at all but a spirit for certain, and its funny but I wasnt nearly as frightened as I was before when I thought he was a madman. I even shook hands with him because he still had his hand out and it was just the same as putting my hand into the middle of a cobweb though he was surprised I could feel anything at all and ever so pleased I could.

Next minute Annie, as true as Im sitting here writing this he started to fade off. Tell the newspapers you saw me and every word I said, he shouted and then there wasn't a trace of him and the kettle boiled dry.

I never told a soul Annie because Miss Norma might think I was quear and get rid of me and it suits me here for the present, though I wish I had your brain to work in the factory. But I want to know what

you think Annie because I just cant get him out of my mind and the sad way he looked, and I have the terrible feeling I am letting him down.

I havent laid eyes on him again, but sometimes I think I can hear him sighing, and youll laugh I know because I know you, but it isn't a nice thing to feel someone is watching you maybe when you are washing yourself or getting ready for bed or things like that. Of course I know it might be hundreds of years before any person sees him again, but still.

Will you just tell me if I am right or wrong to keep my mouth shut. If you havent time to write just put yes or no on a post card.

Are you still going out with your Bill?

Love from your friend
Kate

P.S. I was thinking Annie that if you didnt count Albert that died when he was one, then I would be the seventh daughter. I know Mam was the seventh daughter in her own house, but I dont know if Albert mucks it up. They say the seventh son of the seventh son can see things other people cant. Do you think its the same for the daughters?

K.

17, Myrtle Road
Kingston-on-Thames
6th March 1966

Dear Kate,

Just a P.C. to say I got your letter. You are a one, Kate, you and your ghost. Bill laughed till I thought he was going to have a fit over you getting a letter from the pools and then finding it was only eleven bob, but you keep at it my girl and the day you hit the jackpot you and me will paint the town red. I have a message from Mr. Lynham here at the digs. He's well up, you know. Used to be a schoolmaster, and knows these things. The Earl of Oxford he says was the one wrote the Shakespeare works and he thinks you shouldn't eat cheese or fried things or spicy food, then you won't be having imaginery visitors.

Love from your pal,
Annie

"Marlin Oaks,"
Windlesham Road,
Chobham, Surrey
8th March 1966

Dear Annie,

Thanks for the post card. I was releived to get the message from your

Mr. Lynham but I never eat spicy things anyway and did you tell him it was in the morning and I wasnt having a dream I mean. But anyways we have more to worry us here than ghosts and wait 'til you here. Theres quear things going on and Miss Norma thinks maybe one of the lads from the assylum might be loose and hiding here in the grounds because every one of us had the air let out of our bicycle tyres yesterday and someone threw a stone at the postman and no one knows whatll happen next. I can tell you its enough to put the heart crossways in your body.

I'll write again if I'm here to tell the tale.

Love,
Kate

CLASSIFIED

Rates $1.00 per Word

ADDITIONAL INCOME

MAKE Your Classified Ad Pay. Get "How To Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.00 to C. D. Wilson, Science & Mechanics, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

I MADE $40,000.00 Year by Mailorder! Helped others make money! Start with $10.00 —Free Proof! Torrey, Box 318-T, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.

FREE Book "990 Successful Little-Known Business." Fascinating! Work home! Plymouth 111-M, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11218.

AMAZINGLY Profitable Franchising and Collection Business. Complete Operation Manual $10.00. "Satisfaction Guaranteed." Send 50¢ for Basic Literature. Motivational Services, 2900-SM6 Hempstead Turnpike, Levittown, New York 11756.

MAIL Order dealership selling hundreds educational texts and civil service test guides. Publisher, Box 908, Brooksville, Fla. 33512.

EQMM's Magazine Rack for many interests

CAMPING JOURNAL 75¢—Edited for the camper, fisherman, hunter, boatman, hiker, and others who vacation in the out-of-doors.

INCOME OPPORTUNITIES 75¢—A bi-monthly professionally edited magazine for those persons desirous of going into business for themselves.

MOBILE LIFE 50¢—For present owners and prospective buyers of travel trailers, pick-up campers and mobile homes.

DAVIS PUBLICATIONS EQ-10-67
505 Park Avenue/New York, N. Y./10022
Please send me the latest copy of the magazine(s) I have indicated. I am adding 25¢ to the price indicated to cover postage & handling.
☐ Camping Journal, 75¢ ☐ Mobile LIFE, 50¢
☐ Income Opportunities, 75¢
Name .....
(please print)
Address .....
City ..... State ..... Zip .....

EARTHWORMS

BIG Money Raising Fishworms and Crickets. Free literature. Carter Farm-O, Plains, Georgia 31780.

FARMS, ACERAGE & REAL ESTATE

SOUTHERN Missouri Camping Wilderness Tracts—10 acres—all Mineral Timber Rights included. From $995.00. $50.00 down—$20.00 Monthly. Nomarch, 7505 Jeffery, Chicago, Ill. 60649.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

GIVE the best reading in the Mechanical Field—give Science & Mechanics! $4.00 for year's subscription. Science & Mechanics, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

START Profitable Business in spare time. Investigate many moneymaking agency and franchise opportunities. Send 10¢ for sample copy of Income Opportunities Magazine, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022, Dept. S.

PERSONAL

BILL problems? Poor credit no trouble. Not a loan company. Send for free application. Automatic Acceptance, 318DC Broadway Blvd., Reno, Nev. 89502 or 307DC Pocasset Ave., Providence, R.I. 02909.

WANT New Interesting Friends Worldwide? New Computer Selected Correspondence Program Guarantees Compatible Language Country Interests! Write today. Nomarch, 7505 Jeffrey, Chicago, Ill. 60649.

PRINTING OUTFITS & SUPPLIES

OFFSET Presses, Mimeograph, Typewriter, Copy Machines. Write, Dixiegraph, King, North Carolina 27021.

RARE BOOKS

Out of print mysteries? Our specialty. Aardvarks Book Detectives, Box 1749, Orlando, Fla. 32802.

REMAILING SERVICE

CHICAGO Remails 25¢. Monthly $3.00. Nomarch, 7505 Jeffrey, Chicago, Ill. 60649

MONEY TROUBLES?
Nobody Refused up to $20,000.00

Bad Credit is No Problem ▪ Not a Loan Co.
Strictly confidential — A plan for everyone
We Can Help You — TODAY
Send your name and address for FREE application
ATLANTIC ASSOCIATES, Dept. 95
3312 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85012
146 Westminster St., Providence, Rhode Island 02903

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

Tenuous though its connection with the mystery field may be, I must urge you to read Richard Lockridge's ONE LADY, TWO CATS (Lippincott, $4.95), a fragment of autobiography by one of the most esteemed craftsmen in our profession. It is a delightfully unclassifiable book: a sensitive story of middle-aged love, a superb study in the symbiotic relationship of people and cats, and altogether the happiest entertainment that I have enjoyed this year.

★★★★ **THE WALKING STICK, *by Winston Graham*** (Doubleday, $4.95)

A moving novel of love and sexual awakening which conceals a tightly coiled trap of superbly plotted crime-suspense; Graham's finest book to date and a notable exemplar of the fusion of suspense and "serious" fiction.

★★★★ **GOD SAVE THE MARK, *by Donald E. Westlake*** (Random, $3.95)

Another magnificently Westlakian farce-comedy-thriller, dazzling and hilarious in its variations on the theme of con games and pigeons.

★★★★ **FLYING FINISH, *by Dick Francis*** (Harper & Row, $4.95)

Firm substantial novel of character in action, in which Francis shows that he knows airplanes as well as he knows horses—and people.

★★★★ **PERTURBING SPIRIT, *by Janet Caird*** (Crime Club, $3.95)

Second novel by very bright newcomer; horror at a Scottish festival evokes unconventional blend of eery chills and deft light satire.

★★★ **WALK SOFTLY, MEN PRAYING, *by Oswald Wynd*** (Harcourt, Brace & World, $4.50)

Good lively religio-political intrigue; wonderfully vivid picture of the problems and paradoxes of present-day Japan.

★★★ **MINUTES OF A MURDER, *by Madeleine Polland*** (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $3.95)

Another more-than-promising second novel, shrewdly and wittily observing the course of long-delayed vengeance in modern Ireland.

Baker Street dept.: I cannot see a pressing need for Pierre Nordon's CONAN DOYLE: A BIOGRAPHY (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $7.95). It offers a certain amount of freshly documented research; but the professor from Nantes has nothing new or stimulating to add to the interpretation of a great and complex man or of his imperishable work. (And either Nordon or his translator Frances Partridge writes clumsily and heavily.) . . . SHERLOCK HOLMES INVESTIGATES, selected and introduced by Michael and Mollie Hardwick (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, $3.75), is a pleasing first reader for the young, with informative comments and a wealth of the original Sidney Paget illustrations.

★★★ **A WOMAN NAMED ANNE, *by Henry Cecil*** (Harper & Row, $4.95)

Legal comedy in the exclusive patented Cecil manner, this time about divorce, and with an unexpected detectival plot.

★★★ **LONELYHEART 4122, *by Colin Watson*** (Putnam's, $3.95)

G. J. Smith-type matrimonial murders, treated with urbanity, rich character humor, and markedly neat plotting.

★★★ **ALL MEN ARE LONELY NOW, *by Francis Clifford*** (Coward-McCann, $4.95)

Sound and tricky spy novel, with high suspense, living characters, and beautifully calculated construction.

★★★ **NIGHT OF CLEAR CHOICE, *by Doris Miles Disney*** (Crime Club, $3.95)

Long-blooming professional (this is her 34th novel) presents the classic problem of the long-lost heir refound (is she or isn't she?), with wickedly ingenious variations.

★★★ **THE KILLING SEASON, *by John Redgate*** (Trident, $4.95)

International intrigue, betrayal and revenge, vivified by powerful narrative method—cinematically objective and moving at a terrific pace.

Reprint dept.: Agatha Christie's MURDER IN OUR MIDST (Dodd, Mead, $5.95) contains the first three Jane Marple novels (1930–42)—essential required reading. . . . The quality of Seagull Library introductions has fallen off abruptly since James Nelson took over from Vincent Starrett; but the books revived are still important. William Irish's PHANTOM LADY (1942; Norton, $3.95) is one of the all-time noonday-devil thrillers; and Freeman Wills Crofts' THE CASK (1924; Norton, $4.50) is that great rarity, an accepted classic which proves, on rereading, to be even better than you expect—surely the absolute definitive time-table-alibi novel.

from CANADA

Those of you who have read James Powell's previous two stories in EQMM—"The Friends of Hector Jouvet" in the issue of April 1966, and "The Stollmeyer Sonnets" in the issue of October 1966—will not have to be urged to plunge pronto into Mr. Powell's new story, "The Beddoes Scheme." Mr. Powell's light-hearted but deeply satirical tales are not quite like anything else being written today, in the mystery field or out; and the character of Acting Sergeant Maynard Bullock of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (they always get their man) is one of the freshest detective creations in many a moon . . .

The Beddoes Scheme, we warn you, is big, BIG, BIG, *BIG!!!!*

THE BEDDOES SCHEME

by JAMES POWELL

My first night in the gatehouse had been unsettling. Sometime after midnight the storm woke me. As I lay there in the strange bed, listening to the rain and to the old house creaking like a shoe, a flash of lightning illuminated the window and I saw an ungodly face peering in at me. Its eyes were wide, the mouth was slightly open and the head lolling to one side as though in a noose. Lightning again. Then the window was empty.

Up on the hill a lonely square of light hung in the castle tower. Mr. Beddoes, whoever he was, was working late. Resolving to pull down the shades the next night, I rolled over and went back to sleep.

When I awoke again, the storm had moved out to sea. Whispering voices were coming up the road from the shore. As they passed my window someone stumbled. His curse was in a Romance language, probably Rumanian or Romansh, the only two I wouldn't have recognized.

I went to the window in time to see five dark shapes following the pale egg of a flashlight on the ground. They passed through the gate and up toward the castle. Mr. Beddoes' friends spoke foreign languages . . .

As I prepared breakfast I could see the castle from the kitchen window. It seemed smaller by half in the daylight: the ramparts were lower, the square tower about which rooks had circled in the

moonlight was more massive than high . . . Duff Castle, mentioned in Holinshed.

In the late 1800's when old Garth McTaggart sold his Halifax distillery (McTaggart's Regular, McTaggart's Pride, and Tears of McTaggart Select) to the Montreal whiskey interests, he bought Duff Castle which had loomed over his impoverished boyhood in Scotland. Its stones had been the cargo of the *Great Eastern* on her maiden crossing. Duff Castle, transported and rebuilt near the tiny fishing village of Robbie's Cove, had become McTaggart's Folly, now a Cape Breton landmark for almost a century.

Lowney's old car turned the corner and went through the gate, breaking my thread of thought. The cardboard in the windshield read ROYAL MAIL. The evening before at the Watford railway station it had read TAXI.

It was from Lowney that I first learned the castle had been rented. When the McTaggart property finally went to the county for back taxes, the land beyond the wall including the gatehouse had been sold off. But Duff Castle itself had found no buyers. The county had managed to rent it once before—in the Thirties to a Hollywood company shooting exteriors for a movie entitled *Son of Macbeth*. And now to Mr. Beddoes.

I had decided to begin each day with a walk along the beach for exercise. But there wasn't any beach. Beyond the coarse grass was a shelf of dark, pooled rock. Picking my way over the wet surface, I didn't see the girl until she spoke. "Hi," she said. "That's English for hello. I'm afraid I don't speak Latvian if you're a Lat or something." She was sitting on a rock close to the water—a very pretty girl in an authentic-looking slicker.

"I thought I'd have the sea to myself," I said.

She smiled. "You must have arrived with the batch last night. I didn't see you at dinner."

"I'm staying at the Campbell's—the gatehouse," I said.

She blushed. "I'm sorry. I thought you were one of my father's friends. I'm Amy Beddoes."

"I'm Charles Simpson," I said. But I was pleased by her mistake. At the Watford station, when I had asked Lowney to take me to the gatehouse rather than to McTaggart's Folly, he had nodded sourly. "I spotted you not being a friend of Mr. Beddoes right off," he had said, an estimation clearly not in my favor.

"I really envy you," said Amy Beddoes. "If I owned a castle I'd live in the gatehouse and make the gatekeeper live in the castle."

"That wouldn't be too practical," I said and was about to explain why, when she shrugged.

"The view from the outside is the best," she said. "Father says he's going to live here forever. But I'm

only out for the summers. I'm a senior at a college in New Haven, where the trains come from."

I told her I was an Assistant Professor of classics at Brock College on the Niagara peninsula. Dr. Campbell, my department head, hadn't been able to use his Cape Breton summer home this year, so he had offered it to me. I was here to turn six years of research into a doctoral thesis: *The Influence of Etruscan Fertility Rites on Latin Poetry to 30 B.C.* When I had talked a bit about my work, Amy Beddoes said, "I'm surprised I took you for one of my father's friends. You're not the type at all."

"What does your father do?" I asked.

Amy Beddoes didn't reply. Instead she closed her eyes and threw back her head. "Listen." I heard the sea. "It's just like one of those shells you hold up to your ear," she said. Then she got to her feet. "I'd better be getting back. I play gin rummy with my mother in the mornings to keep her mind off how long it takes the sun to rise above the yardarm."

Have I said that Amy Beddoes was very pretty? Have I said that as we parted at the gate she said, "Tomorrow we'll talk some more about you"? I had to pull myself together before I could sit down at the desk and start to work. When I did, I had the distinct impression that some of my notes were not in the order I had set them out the night before. But I decided to let that pass. I worked through the rest of the morning and afternoon.

About three o'clock a black Rolls-Royce went silently through the gate. There was a solitary figure in the rear seat. An hour later, when the car returned, there were three men in the back. Apparently Mr. Beddoes had met two of his friends at the railway station.

By late afternoon my mind had started to wander. I was staring out the window and thinking about Amy Beddoes when suddenly something moved in the trees on the other side of the road. I blinked. It was gone. Then a red shape flitted from behind the trunk of one tree to another, then after a moment to another, and so on until it had disappeared from view.

I threw down my pen in exasperation. Something curious was obviously going on: a tortured face at the window, foreign voices on the road at night, a mysterious tenant in the castle whose friends were not like me—and now something red and furtive flashing among the trees. If it hadn't been for Amy Beddoes I think I would have packed up and gone back to Brock College where I could work in peace.

That night the gatehouse was plagued with noises. I was going around pulling down the shades to ward off faces in the night when I noticed a light blinking far out at

sea. It was answered by a light on the wharf. A code, apparently. I shook my head and went to bed.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by a loud crash and shout from the kitchen. I rushed in, my curses at the ready. A low moan came from the closet that led up to the attic. Opening the door I found myself looking down on a large red-faced man in the scarlet tunic, blue riding breeches, white lanyard, and wide-brimmed hat of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"All right," he said patiently, "who moved the ladder?"

Before dinner I had used it to replace the light bulb in the hall.

He shook his head sadly, got up, straightened his tunic which had bunched up under the armpits, and ran a thumbnail through his trim mustache. "You must be—Simpson," he said, consulting his notebook.

"Yes, I'm Mr. Simpson," I said, looking him up and down. "Constable—?"

"Acting Sergeant Maynard Bullock," he said, placing three fingers significantly on the bare sleeve of his tunic. He moved past me to the refrigerator.

"Would you mind telling me what's going on?" I asked.

Bullock paused with the refrigerator door open. "I wish I knew, Simpson. I really wish I knew," he said. He took two eggs and began to scramble them. "I keep a record of all I take," he said. "When I leave I'll give you a voucher redeemable at any post office. And there'll be a little form I'd like you to sign saying I left the kitchen tidy."

Dabbing a dollop of jam on his toast he added, "Have you ever tried that marmalade that comes in those little stone jars? No? Good old Mavis, my wife, always keeps a jar in the house. It's my only vice. Well, let's go into the living room and talk this thing out."

We sat facing each other. Bullock balanced the plate on his knees and ate heartily for a few minutes. Then he said, "First off, Simpson, I'm going to have to swear you to secrecy."

I told him I didn't want to be sworn to secrecy. "I just want you to get out of here so I can get some work done."

"That might prove inconvenient," said Bullock, "though not impossible. I once lived for an entire week in the dead of winter concealed in an old hollow tree to capture the celebrated Jean-Loup Batoche who was smuggling in American cigarettes along the Champlain Trail. The very next day after I got into the tree, I might add, Batoche snowshoed by, 5000 filter cigarettes and all."

Bullock set his empty plate on the floor and brushed the crumbs from his tunic. "So you see, Simpson, I could leave. But what—"

"Wait a minute," I said. "You said you stayed in that tree for a week."

Bullock smiled sourly and pulled

a large curved pipe from his pocket.

"As it happened," he said, "when Batoche came by I discovered that my arms were wedged in at my sides and I couldn't get out. Three days later when he came by with a second load I had worked my handcuffs out of my pocket and my right hand up to a hole in the trunk. I decided to try a bluff. I called him over. He was a very surprised smuggler, let me tell you. Explaining who I was, I ordered him to hold his wrist up to the hole. Well, as he himself pointed out, it was blowing up a blizzard. So he chatted amiably for a while, pressed several packs of cigarettes on me, and left. The local RCMP barracks received an anonymous phone call three days later telling them where I was."

Bullock puffed thoughtfully for a bit. Then he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and the pipe wrapped in his large fists. "For the sake of argument," he said, "let's assume you've been sworn to secrecy." He nodded toward my notes and manuscript. "I've checked you out, Simpson, and you seem on the level. I need your cooperation. I want to use this house as my base of operations."

"I don't understand," I said.

"By godfrey, Simpson," said Bullock, waving toward the castle, "you and I know something fishy's going on up there. What about those deliveries of electronic equipment in boxes marked DOG FOOD? Why are the African drums around Lake Chad beating out Beddoes' name? And what about those submarines of Panamanian registry slipping people ashore here and taking them away at night? We could nail your Mr. Beddoes on that last business alone. But that's nickel-and-dime stuff. What's behind it all? Smuggling? Counterfeiting? Espionage? *Some* kind of monkeyshines, we know that."

Bullock opened his notebook. "Listen to this: Jacob Henderson Beddoes, born 1910; worked way through Harvard as a professional boxer . . . Ever hear of Gentleman Jake Beddoes, the heavyweight contender in the early Thirties?"

When I shook my head Bullock continued his reading. "Joined the Klein and Dawes Advertising Agency in 1935, which became Beddoes and Klein in 1938. Battlefield commission in Sicily in 1943. Congressional Medal of Honor the following year: *His command destroyed and though wounded himself, Captain Beddoes, armed only with a portable bullhorn, did induce four crack Panzer units to surrender.*" Bullock looked up. "You've heard of the Manhattan Project?"

"The atomic bomb," I said.

Bullock nodded. "But have you ever heard of the Beddoes Project? It was top secret. All we know is that the atomic bomb got there first." He returned to his notebook. "In 1945 he founded the Beddoes

Agency. By 1949 all the major advertising agencies had merged under him to form the Beddoes Group. Then about four years ago there was a scandal of some sort. The Beddoes Group dissolved almost overnight and Beddoes himself dropped from sight." Bullock snapped the notebook shut.

"Take a look at this," he said and pulled a large photograph out of his tunic. "I took it from the attic." The photograph showed a terrace in front of Duff Castle. The shadows were those of a few minutes before sunset. Twelve men with after-dinner cigars were standing at a respectful distance watching a thirteenth, a tall man with a large impressive head topped with gray hair turning white at the temples. He was feeding some large black birds on the lawn.

"There's your Beddoes," said Bullock. "But have you ever seen birds like that before?"

"Rooks," I said. The night of my arrival I had asked Lowney what they were. "They came with the castle," Lowney had said sullenly as he took my bags from the trunk of his car. "There's a legend around here about those rooks." Lowney had closed his eyes and recited: "As long as there are rooks at McTaggart's Folly, Robbie's Cove will ne'er go on Daylight Saving Time."

"Notice anything strange about Beddoes and those birds?" asked Bullock.

"He seems to be talking to them."

"That's only half of it," said Bullock. "But a detective sees the other half, the important half." He tapped the photograph with his finger. "Those birds are *listening*."

I looked again. Bullock was right.

"And who are these other people?" he said. "The one on the end there is Hakkim Raschid, the mystery man of the Middle East. Saint or sinner? Interpol would like to know. The one with the pipe is Sir Harley Smith-Watkins, the nuclear physicist. The one in the leather shorts is Emerich Schnitzler, whose grandfather founded Schnitzler S.A., the chemical complex. Neither side can use a whiff of poison gas without paying royalties to Schnitzler S.A. This one, the grandson, is a medical missionary in a South Seas leper colony and an author of bawdy limericks. In the blue overalls we have Hao Yang Cheng, the Red Chinese ideologist. Beside him in the leggings is either the Dean of Newbury Cathedral, C. of E., or the R. C. Cardinal, Archbishop of Graetz, Austria. This one is Joseph Makembwa, the Bantu philosopher and humanitarian, known popularly as the Heart of Darkest Africa. The double-breasted suit is Avo Montenegro, the Croat novelist. The one in the dhoti is Rabindranath Sudraka, celebrated guru and contract bridge champion. Next we have Wallingford Riggs, the baby food magnate. And next to him Massimo Scarlatini, the motion picture producer.

This one here is Dr. Toshiya Katasuru, Nobel Prize winner in oceanography. And finally, M. I. Scriabin, the Soviet commentator and guest panelist. Find the common thread linking these people and the rest of Beddoes' strange friends and we've unraveled our enigma!"

"*Your* enigma," I said, getting to my feet. "Suit yourself about staying. As for me, I'm going to bed."

"Sleep well," said Bullock. "I'm going to sit up for a while and see if I can sort this thing out. You know, Simpson, I've spent the last five years guarding the flowerbeds in front of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. Then out of the blue I'm assigned to this investigation. Talk is that the Minister of Justice himself asked for me by name." Bullock bowed his head modestly. "I think they've got their eye on me."

The next morning down on the rocks I tried to ask Amy about her father but she shook her head. "We're supposed to talk about you," she insisted.

I've often suspected that I'm a bit of a stick-in-the-mud. But as I began to speak, the depths of my ordinariness appalled me. To my surprise, however, Amy was a contented, almost eager listener. In fact, for the next week we talked every morning about me, about my humdrum life at Brock College, about the security of tenure that would be mine with the thesis accepted, and even about the thesis itself.

For some strange reason she liked to hear me talk about the thesis. Once, when I had outlined a chapter, she said dreamily, "Boy, there's no chance of that making the best-seller list." Another time she seemed anxious to assure herself that apart from scholarship my study of Etruscan fertility rites was of no practical value.

"The Etruscans are extinct, if that's what you mean," I said.

So my days began to take on a regular pattern. I would meet Amy on the shore. Then I would work while Bullock, deep in thought, paced up and down the living room puffing on his pipe. Except for excursions "to take a look-see for footprints, et cetera," Bullock stuck close to the gatehouse. "We don't want to tip our hand too soon," he would say with a wink.

Whenever the Rolls-Royce or Lowney's taxi passed, taking visitors to and from the railway station, Bullock would crouch by the window, his ballpoint pen would go click-click and he would write down the license number and the exact time. Once he staggered back from the window and said, "My old eyes must be playing tricks on me, Simpson. I could have sworn one of the men in that car was our own Deputy Minister of External Affairs."

Each night, between watching the

after-dinner strollers through field glasses and the signal from the offshore submarine, Bullock phoned Ottawa. "Acting Sergeant Bullock here . . . No, no *new* developments. However, I . . . Check . . . Check . . . But I—" Each time an invisible hand slapped Bullock's face and I knew he had been hung up on.

Once when he caught me watching, Bullock shouted into the dead receiver, "Yeah? Well, why don't you go soak your head?" and slammed down the phone. "'Are you asleep at the switch out there, Bullock?'" he mimicked for my benefit. "'Don't forget to touch home base, Bullock.' 'Where's your expense account in triplicate, Bullock?' By godfrey, Simpson, the man in the front line needs a little of the milk of human kindness, not all this badgering and red tape. Well, if this Beddoes business is as big as I think it is, it could mean a desk job for yours truly with one of those stuffed buffalo heads on the wall and my own telephone. By godfrey, I'd make the other fellows hop." He thought about that for a minute. Then he said, "Say, I could go for a game of cribbage to sharpen the old wits."

"I think I'll turn in," I said.

One overcast afternoon with Bullock off somewhere in the trees having a "look-see," the Rolls-Royce glided through the gate and was gone. Soon after the rain began.

An hour later it was coming down in sheets. Suddenly there was a pounding on the front door. I opened it to find myself face to face with the apparition in the window the night of my arrival. The eyes were wide. The mouth hung open. The head lolled to one side as though in a noose. Only the chauffeur's cap with the water dripping from the visor was new. The mouth moved but the sounds were guttural and unintelligible. The man raised a fist to the side of his head in a menacing way. When I stepped back, he brushed past me to the telephone.

"I'm afraid Hogan is a bit hard to understand at first, Mr. Simpson." Beddoes himself, large and imposing, was standing in the rain on the doorstep. "I'm your neighbor, Jake Beddoes," he said, offering me a firm handshake. He stood patiently in the rain until I recovered myself and invited him in. "I'm afraid we've gotten ourselves stuck in the pothole," he said. "Hogan refuses to let me walk up to the castle in all this rain. He gets quite excited if I don't let him baby me."

While he spoke Beddoes was appraising me openly. All at once I had the impression he approved of what he saw. Only then did he smile. "Rather than wait in the car, I thought I'd take this chance to introduce myself," he said.

We came into the living room where I put a match to the wood in the fireplace. However, it was not

the fire but Beddoes, at ease and courtly, who was the room's center. Hogan came in, said something, and took up a place behind Beddoes' chair. "Have you met Mr. Lowney, the reeve of Robbie's Cove?" said Beddoes. "He'll be coming by for us in a few minutes."

We talked a bit about the weather. Then Beddoes said, "Do you mind my asking what brings you to these parts, Mr. Simpson?" I mentioned my thesis and his face brightened. With questions revealing more than a layman's knowledge of my field he drew me into a description of my work.

"Well," said Beddoes finally, "if you're looking for peace and quiet, this is the place. The television station in Sydney doesn't broadcast this far and back in the Thirties when the government thought up radio-license fees the only radio in Robbie's Cove was taken out to sea and dropped overboard right in the middle of the Major Bowes Amateur Hour." Hogan said something. "That's right," said Beddoes. "Old Mrs. Mears has a wind-up Victrola and some Sir Harry Lauder records. Hogan is our expert on what's going on in the area. Yes, you might say that we're living in the quiet eye of the communications hurricane. A fitting retreat for a retired advertising man, don't you think?"

"Somehow you're not my idea of an advertising man," I said. "To be honest, I've always agreed with my colleagues in the English Department that advertising is a gigantic insult to human intelligence."

Hogan had started forward angrily at my words, but Beddoes waved him back. "I admire your frankness, Mr. Simpson," he said. "Well, tell your colleagues they are right."

Beddoes smiled sadly. "How strange that sounds coming from me! You know, Mr. Simpson, I can recall my first big advertising account as though it were only yesterday. The Royal Shoe people were marketing a new brogan. I called it Foot Prince—*Foot Prince—The Shoe Fit for a King*. Under that name it sold beyond all expectations. I was delighted. You see, Young Jake Beddoes told himself that if today he could persuade people to buy shoes, perhaps tomorrow he would hit upon that certain slogan or bright box that would charm people into leaving all the Brand-X fears, hatreds, and anxieties on the shelf and take instead the giant-size package of Peace and Brotherhood. That was his dream, Mr. Simpson—to find that bright box. Was that really so wrong?"

"I think it sounds like a very worthwhile idea," I said.

Beddoes had risen at the sound of a car stopping outside. He considered my last remark. "Yes, I believe you do," he said. He shook my hand. "Perhaps you'll have dinner with us one of these evenings. Our hospitality is a bit overextended at the moment. But the next five or six days

will see the end of that. How does a week from tonight sound?"

I said that would be fine.

Lowney was standing with Hogan at the door. He looked me over suspiciously. "Is this man giving you any trouble, Mr. Beddoes?" he asked.

Beddoes laughed out loud. "No. Of course not, Mr. Lowney."

Later that evening as Bullock stood in his underwear ironing the brim of his rain-warped hat, he said, "You can fall for that casual visit stuff if you like, Simpson. I say he suspects something. Maybe it's time to make my move."

The next morning Bullock propped a shaving mirror on the fireplace mantel and began carefully to smear his face and behind his ears with the end of a burnt cork. "One of the tricks of the trade," he said as he worked. Then I watched from the window as, red-coated and black-faced, Bullock slipped through the gate.

Have I said that Amy was sometimes perplexing? For example, when I mentioned my meeting with her father, adding that he struck me as a fine person, she said, "Oh, he's certainly that." But then she pulled at a clasp on her slicker and said sadly, "I guess you were bound to meet him sooner or later."

But if I found her sometimes perplexing, there was no mistaking her interest in me. Indirectly, and as far as honesty would permit, I began to draw an agreeable picture of the life of an Assistant Professor's wife at Brock College.

As for Bullock, he returned each night to eat and make his phone report to Ottawa. "That Hogan keeps the pantry under lock and key," he said over scrambled eggs. "And I need my little snacks. I find it hard to think without something sticking to the old ribs. But I think I've got the whole business figured out. In three words: sweepstake tickets—an international sweepstake-ticket ring."

Another night as he combed the kitchen for a fresh cork to burn, he looked at me solemnly and said, "Try this one on for size, Simpson: suppose Beddoes is one of those mad scientists about to unleash an electronic monster of his own creating on an unsuspecting world." With that he said, "Sleep well, Simpson," and slipped outside and back up to the castle.

Over the next few days there was a flurry of activity at the castle as the last of the visitors departed. The night before I was to have dinner with Beddoes, Bullock, who had just brushed the crumbs off his tunic and lit his pipe, exclaimed, "By godfrey, E. J. Canby!" He looked at me triumphantly. "Simpson, like the little man who wasn't there I've seen a lot these last few days and heard an earful, though most of it in languages I couldn't understand.

However, one name kept recurring: E. J. Canby. Does that ring a bell?"

I shook my head.

"About four years ago the body of E. J. Canby, the most powerful man in Wall Street, was found washed up on a beach near New York City. The verdict was accidental death by drowning. I knew I had heard the name before, but it only just came back to me. Something about the case stuck in my craw at the time. Why, I asked myself, should the drowned body of a financial tycoon be wearing a bicycle clip on one trouser leg? Simpson, I have reason to suspect that Beddoes was responsible for the death of E. J. Canby."

"I'm sure there's some perfectly natural explanation," I said.

As I walked through the gate and up the road for the first time, the setting sun glinted in the windows of Duff Castle and the rooks circled the tower. A shelf of dark clouds sat on the horizon behind the walls, waiting to move out to sea. I had imagined that the stones of the castle would be numbered, marked by the Scot dismantlers to guide the rebuilders, that the castle would stand against the sky like a giant painting-by-numbers project. Of course it did not. Nor was there a massive, animal-head knocker on the door or even a trumpet hanging by a chain. Below a card holder that said BEDDOES was an electric bell.

I was shown into the great hall under Hogan's distrustful eye. It was a paneled and beamed room with an immense fireplace and a thick-bannistered staircase leading up to a gallery. A trim, blonde woman in her forties with a tired but not unpleasant face rose unsteadily as I entered and raised a Martini glass in my direction.

When she had poured me a drink and refilled her own she said, "My daughter speaks very highly of you, Mr. Simpson."

"I'm afraid meeting me may be something of a disappointment," I said.

"I hope so," she said. "I suppose you find that strange. Well, Amy has told me about the two of you and if you want my blessing I give it to you. You see, I don't want Amy to make my mistake I don't want her to marry the alternative to the atomic bomb."

"You mean the Beddoes Project?" I asked.

She nodded. "The idea was simple enough. Parachute Jake into the garden of Emperor Hirohito's summer palace. The Emperor would be watching the cherry blossoms and composing haiku. Jake would float down and talk to him. My husband's Japanese is fluent. The Emperor would announce Japan's unconditional surrender and apply for membership in the United Nations."

Mrs. Beddoes took a drink from her glass. "Mr. Simpson," she said in a half whisper, "what I'm trying

to say in a roundabout way is that if you love my daughter you must take her away from here before it's too late. It was bad enough before, but now there is a terrible goodness about this place."

"Well, I see you've met my better half, Mr. Simpson." It was Beddoes, speaking through a smile as he came down the staircase.

"Your wife was just telling me about the Beddoes Project," I said.

Beddoes took a sip of the Martini his wife handed him. "That was a long time ago," he said "But it was no hare-brained operation, believe me," he said. "My team had gone over it detail by detail. I remember I had just made my fifteenth practice jump onto a patio belonging to a real estate man near Albuquerque when we received word that the Manhattan Project people"—he fluttered a disparaging hand—"and their bomb had won out.

"More people were killed by the bomb than the world knows, Mr. Simpson," said Beddoes. "Let me tell you a story about that. Our last conversation may have left you with too flattering an impression of the man now standing before you."

Mrs. Beddoes poured herself another drink.

"It was five years ago next August 17, as I remember well," Beddoes went on. "We still had the place on Long Island. There were guests out for the week-end. A good crowd, and among them a dozen quiet men who, I may say without fear of contradiction, controlled America's finances and vast communications structure—bankers, corporation presidents, the king of a newspaper and newsmagazine empire, heads of the major radio and television networks, a book club president, and an advertising man second only to myself. There were also a number of relatively younger men—vice-presidents, editors, junior partners—in related fields. I had brought them all together for a purpose of my own.

"Early in the evening I led the conversation around to a familiar subject—the relative merits of Wall Street versus Madison Avenue. With everyone a bit in their cups the discussion became quite animated. 'Well,' I said, 'why not decide the whole question on the playing field?' They thought I meant Indian wrestling. 'No, no,' I said, 'I have just had a brainstorm. Polocycle, gentlemen. Polocycle, the game of the future.'

"A dozen tricycles and croquet mallets were brought in. I had picked them up a few days before for a local orphanage. The twelve quiet men took up the idea at once, amused by the prospect of seeing their juniors make fools of themselves. Wall Street and Madison Avenue shouted challenges at each other. The younger men were less enthusiastic. I believe it was the crash helmets, six black and six white, that carried the day.

"The lawn in front of the house

was flat and large enough for our purposes before it fell in terraces to the Sound. We marked off a field, sixty feet from goal to goal. During the warm-up, knees were everywhere, but with the help of two stiff stirrup cups the kinks worked themselves out. An Undersecretary of the Navy acted as referee. The toss went to Madison Avenue. The clash of mallets. Some fine passing. Furious pedaling on the breakaways. Up and down the field.

"As I recall, Wall Street beat off a last-minute, hell-for-leather charge to win three games out of five. There was great joy in the Wall Street camp and several new board members were named on the spot.

"As you might imagine, the Wall Street seniors laid it on their Madison Avenue colleagues unmercifully—the dissolute character of uptown life, the value of *mens sana in corpore sano,* the clear eye, the level head.

"Finally, smarting under all this abuse, a network president who, at sixty-five prided himself on his flat stomach, shouted the challenge I knew would come. The crowd fell silent. Then, as their juniors looked on with awe, the twelve quiet men, uneasy but determined, donned the crash helmets and took their respective places on the tricycles.

"I watched with amusement as the unseemly spectacle began anew. I felt great power, Mr. Simpson—I was controlling those who themselves controlled so much.

"Then abruptly came a rush on the Wall Street goal. The ball went out of bounds and E J. Canby, former head of the World Bank, now Chairman of the Board of the Barlow Trust, faded back to recover."

At the mention of Canby's name I heard a faint click-click. Bullock and his ballpoint pen were hiding somewhere in the shadows.

Beddoes paid no attention and continued. "But as Canby faded back he passed too close to the terrace and before our eyes his tricycle plunged down the incline out of control.

"He struggled for mastery of his little machine but when he hit the next level, going faster, his feet slipped from the pedals and he careened down the next slope with ever-increasing speed. We all stood there thunder-struck. Yet somehow as I watched that helpless, terrorized man with his portly bottom enveloping the little leather tricycle seat, I thought of the World Bank and the Barlow Trust and I laughed. It was an ugly laugh and it rang in the silence.

"Canby heard me for as he hit the final slope that ended in a ten-foot drop to the swift currents of the Sound, he shouted, 'Damn you, Beddoes!' Then the tip of his cigar arced brightly down into the darkness and he was gone

"It is no small thing to be cursed by the Chairman of the Board of the Barlow Trust, Mr. Simpson. Of course no one held me responsible

—an unfortunate accident, they said. But the word was out: Jake Beddoes is insincere. And overnight all doors were closed to me."

Beddoes stopped. Amy, looking very pretty—it was the first time I had seen her without the slicker—had joined us and was watching me. Just then Hogan announced that dinner was ready.

The meal began in silence. I was waiting for Beddoes to speak again and trying to locate Bullock's hiding place. Amy sat quietly at her place, while Mrs. Beddoes had brought another cocktail to the table and was working away at it with great deliberation. Bullock's pen went click-click when, past the soup and well into the roast, Beddoes began again as though thinking out loud.

"How did Jake Beddoes come to find himself at the height of his power laughing as E. J. Canby rode a tricycle to oblivion? Where was he now, that idealistic young man who had dreamed of a bright box to purvey Justice and Brotherhood? I'll tell you: when the Beddoes Project lost out to the equations of the atomic scientists, Beddoes had turned imperceptibly sour. He and E. J. Canby were as much victims of the bomb as the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It just took the radiation a little longer

"Was it all over then for the young man's dream? No. That couldn't be true. Young Jake Beddoes and his bright box had to have another chance. Why? Here's one reason why."

Beddoes pointed to Hogan who was silently hobbling around the table with a napkined basket of rolls. "What do you see, Mr. Simpson? The babbling wreckage of a man. Well, it wasn't always so. Hogan was once my good right arm, loyal to me in all things, privy to all my dreams, a Yale man and a fine person in his own right. For me he drove himself too close to the edge and when all we had built up collapsed, something inside Hogan snapped and he became what you now see. In part it was for his sake and for many others like him that I knew I must try again. Isn't that right, Hogan? We're trying again. And it will work. By god, it will work!"

Hogan's eyes lit up excitedly. Beddoes' words seemed to pluck at nerves all over his body. A roll fell from his basket. I thought he was going to fall to his trembling knees and kiss Beddoes' hand.

Beddoes patted him on the arm. "Good man. Good man."

At that moment I saw a scarlet sleeve come out from under the table, snatch up the roll, and disappear again.

Beddoes returned to me. "But the task before me was a difficult one, Mr. Simpson. Abstractions are not marketable. Peace and Brotherhood, just the bare bones of them, won't sell. You need a peg to hang them on—that bright box.

"Well, I thought and I thought and gradually an idea began to take shape in my mind. I pondered it, found it good, and set it down on paper. I sent what I had written to certain friends of broad and varied influence whom I had met in my world travels. Their response was overwhelmingly favorable.

"I set out immediately on an extended journey, traveling as a certain George Muncie, import-export, for secrecy had to be the heart of our endeavor. I visited the capitals of Europe. In Berlin I slipped behind the Iron Curtain, visited Eastern Europe, Russia, China, emerging in Hong Kong. Through the Far East. Australia. Throughout Latin America. Everywhere there were clandestine meetings with my special people. From these meetings and my original outline we developed what I called simply The Scheme. But they wanted a name. I suggested we call it the E. J. Canby Memorial Scheme. But they said no. No, they said, let's call it the Beddoes Scheme. And so we did.

"The past two years have been spent here in this quiet castle, working out the details in close cooperation with my friends."

Hogan appeared with the coffee.

"Well, enough of the Beddoes Scheme for now," said Beddoes, as we rose and adjourned to the chairs around the fireplace. "But afterward I have some things I'd like to show you." Then Beddoes added in a low voice, "By the way, if you run into Acting Sergeant Bullock in the hall, as I'm sure you will, please pretend you don't see him. I'm afraid he thinks burnt cork makes him invisible. I gather it means a lot to him."

Following coffee, Beddoes asked his wife and Amy to excuse us and I accompanied him upstairs. We walked along the gallery and into a hallway and suddenly came upon Bullock hurrying from the other direction. He flattened himself against the wall in what little shadow there was and squeezed his eyes shut. We had to turn to avoid bumping into him. I followed Beddoes up a spiral staircase.

Beddoes unlocked his study and showed me in. One half of the room was filled with television control panels, cameras, and equipment. Four easels draped with green felt stood against the wall.

"What would you say, Mr. Simpson, if I told you that we have found the bright box that can draw all men together in universal solidarity and banish guilt and fear?"

"I'd say you really have something," I said.

Beddoes looked away and said, "But suppose I told you that the bright box is a person?"

Before I could answer he had crossed to the first easel. "This is Phase One of the Beddoes Scheme," he said. "Of course, what you are about to see is only a small part of one aspect of Phase One." He removed the cloth.

There was a stack of posters on the easel. The uppermost was a drawing of a tall heroic figure in gray overalls reaching up and touching the moon, while behind him, all eyes on his face, stood a worker holding a large monkey wrench, a farmer with a spike of wheat, a secretary with a pad and pencil, and other representative figures. "The inevitability of history moves the Russian people toward the moon," said Beddoes, translating the Cyrillic legend.

The next poster showed an American dentist with one of those round reflectors on his head. The caption said, "Some plain talk to Moms and Dads about tooth decay."

The last poster showed an Arab in a burnoose letting a handful of sand pour through his finger as he pointed over his shoulder at the Aswan Dam. "Tomorrow the Garden of Allah," translated Beddoes.

The three posters had a certain compelling quality that held my eye. But I couldn't see the point. Beddoes watched me silently. I was about to shake my head when it came to me. I flipped back through the posters. In each of them, from the man touching the moon to the Arab, the face was Beddoes' face.

"Yes," he said shyly, "it's me. I am also the face of Amerigo Vespucci on the forty-lire commemorative stamp and Hans Christian Andersen on the new Danish ten-kroner note. In a certain Latin American republic a larger-than-life-size statue of Juan Garcia Morales, the Father of His Country, was recently unveiled and that too is me.

"Yes, Jake Beddoes is the bright box I had been looking for. Initially, you see, we had to make Jake Beddoes' face familiar and give it a positive association. Along with these posters there were also walk-on parts in films and television dramas, scenes shot in the course of my trip with a story built around them: I was the man whose hand Lenin is shaking so warmly at the Finland Station; I was the celebrated brain surgeon who saves the hero for his life of great music; I was the kindly judge whose 'Case dismissed' saves a woman's life.

"And as we made the face familiar, so the voice. I speak most languages fluently. Our friends in the various regimes, civil services, and networks introduced what we called 'The Thought for the Day' into their programming. Beddoes speaks for half a minute without being identified. And we used these same spots for piped music, the kind you hear in department stores, bars, and elevators. The music stops. A voice speaks out of nowhere. What do I say? A thousand things, Mr. Simpson. I like people. I like the human condition and I'm not ashamed of it.

"This initial phase lasted for a year. Then it was time to make Jake Beddoes known by name. Phase Two."

The first poster on the second easel showed Beddoes in a double-breasted suit seated at a Louis XIV desk with a tapestry of knights and unicorns at his back. The pose and the lighting were arranged so as to accentuate his nose. "Jake Beddoes says: We must share the glory of France with the world," translated Beddoes.

In the next he wore a pearly-king outfit, a cockney grin, and held up two fingers to form a V. "Jake Beddoes says: There'll always be an England."

The next poster was a drawing much like the man touching the moon except that the figures were Chinese and it was an oriental Beddoes in blue overalls who held aloft what looked like a metal loaf of bread. "Jake Beddoes says: The Peoples' Republic can achieve its pig-iron quota," translated Beddoes.

The last one showed Beddoes in a fire ranger's hat. "Jake Beddoes says: Please! Only *you* can prevent forest fires."

Beddoes tapped the second set of posters. "In many a totalitarian country," he said, "Youth for Beddoes Groups risk imprisonment or death putting up posters like these in the night.

"Meanwhile a hidden radio transmitter in the Urals is beaming Radio Free Beddoes through the Communist world, while picket ships off Zanzibar, Cape Hatteras, and the mouth of the Orinoco transmit The Voice of Beddoes, music in good taste for your listening pleasure, and on the hour, a fifteen-minute prerecorded 'Coffee-Break with Beddoes.' I tell bureaucrats to be human beings, children to be obedient, old people to be patient. Perhaps I just tell them to boil their drinking water or fasten their seat belts. What's important is that they hear a voice that really cares and understands.

"The past month has been our Phase Three," continued Beddoes, as he uncovered the third easel. The top poster showed an African native squatting on his haunches. "Jocomo Kavubu likes Jake Beddoes," said Beddoes, translating the caption. "You might call this the testimonial stage. The subjects here are all national types but their endorsements are nonetheless real. I spent time with all of them, talking, listening, getting acquainted. 'Stay here, Beddoes,' Jocomo said when I had to leave, 'and you and I will sit together and watch the rest of the world go by.' But I couldn't stay, Mr. Simpson, though I was sorely tempted.

"And here you have Jan Marttens, a retired barge captain in Rotterdam. He likes Jake Beddoes. And so does Mrs. Doris Weams here, Iowa mother of five.

"Along with these posters we have a number of novelty items—bumper stickers, Beddoes buttons, balloons and kits." Beddoes laughed. "Here, you might get a

kick out of this." He opened a drawer and tossed a red felt beanie on the desk. It had *I like Beddoes* stitched in gold script across the front. On each side was the plastic replica of a human ear. "Mine," smiled Beddoes, touching his ears. "One of our friends on the West Coast got the idea and had a few dozen made up. I thanked him for the thought but said I wasn't sure it was exactly the kind of thing we were trying to do.

"By Phase Three, as you might imagine, certain people had started wondering what was going on—heads of secret police who weren't sleeping too well, newspaper editors with the smell of a story in their nostrils, politicians chewing cigars over strange signals from the grassroots. I gather most of them suspect it's some kind of advertising stunt, but they can't figure out the product." Beddoes looked at me and smiled. "Perhaps you can't either, Mr. Simpson."

I shook my head.

"World solidarity, Mr. Simpson. All peoples united by one thing—they all like Jake Beddoes. When that happens, then all their fears of each other will go out the window and with the fears, half the political, economic, and psychological problems of our planet.

"And what about the other half of their fears? That is our ace in the hole—Phase Four." Beddoes unveiled the final easel. The single poster was a large close-up of Beddoes' face. Strong, relaxed, thoughtful. The eyes ready to smile, the mouth to speak many things to many people. Underneath was the simple caption: "Jake Beddoes likes you."

"First we get rid of the fear," said Beddoes. "Now we get rid of the guilt. Jake Beddoes likes them. Once we get that message across, then the little man everywhere will rise up and march side by side with his neighbor toward a future free of ideology, venal compromise, antagonisms of class, race, or creed, a future where all his reverses will be insignificant because they cannot dull the one essential truth—that he likes Beddoes and that Beddoes likes him. Phase Four goes into operation tomorrow.

"Well, there you are, Mr. Simpson. The Beddoes Scheme. What do you think?"

"It's a big idea, sir—really big," I said. "And it just might work."

"It *will* work, Mr. Simpson. It *will* work," said Beddoes. "And next week from a hidden launching site near Lake Chad we put up our first communications satellite into orbit—Beddsat. Every evening from then on I will come up here after dinner, sit at that desk, and in a broadcast seen live around the world I will talk to them all. 'An Hour with Beddoes.' We will broadcast from here because this is the home I have sworn never to leave. No, personal power and glory aren't what I'm after. Jake Beddoes, the

person, is dead. In his place is the bright box. You know, this may sound blasphemous, Mr. Simpson, but just as in simpler times gods became men to make men better, perhaps it's time for one man to give his fellow men hope by assuming a little bit of the Divinity in their eyes. Just a little bit." He measured it out between a thumb and index finger.

Distant thunder intruded into the room. Beddoes looked at his watch. "I'm afraid the ladies will be wondering what happened to us."

He was about to turn off the light when I crossed to the desk. "Would you mind if I kept this, sir?" I said, picking up one of the beanies.

Beddoes laughed. "As a kind of souvenir of our little talk? Go right ahead, Simpson."

"Mother decided to turn in," said Amy. "With the decanter, if you're thinking of a nightcap."

I said I'd better be getting back. As Beddoes shook my hand he invited me to lunch the next day. "We can talk some more," he said. Watching him go back upstairs I felt guilty because I knew he was going up to his study where, alone and well into the night, he would ponder over another Hour with Beddoes.

Though I protested that the storm was about to break, Amy insisted on walking me back to the gatehouse.

The wind was in the trees as we walked down the driveway. Every few seconds lightning made the horizon glow as the thunder came closer.

Finally Amy said, "I expect he told you everything."

"It's big, Amy—I had no idea how really big! And here's the beautiful part—it will work."

"Oh, it may work, it really may," she said. "But what about us? What about all the humdrum, dull routine of the Assistant Professor of classics and his wife?"

"How's that going to be changed?" I asked.

"But it's already changed," she said. "Just look at yourself. You're all worked up. It's a side of you I've never seen before."

Bullock was eating scrambled eggs in the living room. When he saw Amy he said, "Oh, hello there," and threw me a wink. "I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd drop in." I introduced him as an old friend and asked Amy to make a pot of coffee.

When she had gone into the kitchen, Bullock said, "That was using the old noggin, Simpson. I'm just about to call Ottawa and nip Beddoes in the bud."

"I don't think you understand," I said.

"Don't tell me. Let me guess," said Bullock smugly. "What I overheard tonight tied all the pieces of our puzzle together." Bullock went to the phone and began to dial.

"But it's Peace and Brotherhood."

"So I understand," said Bullock. "But on whose terms?" Then he spoke crisply into the telephone. "Acting Sergeant Bullock here. I'm ready to close the case. I have reason to believe that the entire castle is an immense Doomsday machine, an immense atomic bomb . . . Listen, this is far from a laughing matter. The way I see it, this Beddoes fellow has his finger on the button and unless we agree to his fiendish terms of World Peace and Brotherhood he'll blow our poor tired planet to smithereens. The way I see it we . . . but . . . Check . . . Check . . ." An invisible hand slapped Bullock's face. He stared at the dead receiver in disbelief and collapsed into a chair. "They're dropping the whole investigation," he said in an astonished voice. "Apparently Beddoes has friends in high places. Even in Ottawa." Bullock put his face in his hands. "Our poor tired planet," he moaned.

"But the Beddoes Scheme isn't what you think," I said. I described my conversation with Beddoes in the tower room and what I had seen there. He seemed to take heart at my words for when I had finished Bullock peered at me through his fingers.

"No Doomsday machine? No fiendish terms?" he said.

"Beddoes is a great man, Bullock," I said. "I like Beddoes"—I pulled the beanie out of my pocket —"and he likes me."

"Say," said Bullock, admiring the beanie, "that's nifty. You know, I came here with a job to do. But just between you, me, and the lamppost, I've rather come to like the man myself."

Amy set down the coffee tray heavily when she saw the beanie.

"Well, why not?" I said. "Amy, your father is a great man. I don't think you appreciate all he's trying to accomplish. Well, I do and I'm behind him all the way."

I waved the beanie in front of her. "I want you to know I'm not ashamed of this," I shouted and with only a moment's hesitation I popped the beanie on my head.

At that instant a brilliant flash of lightning overexposed the trees and a detonation of thunder rattled the casements. We rushed to the window. Duff Castle was bathed in an eerie light. The lightning came again as we watched. A heavy crack of light struck the castle tower. The tower wavered like a boxer throwing off a punch. The lightning struck again, a shorter, more deliberate stroke. The tower trembled, turned slightly, and then McTaggart's Folly collapsed in ruins.

"By godfrey!" said Bullock.

The morning light was tracing out the smoking timbers and broken walls when Lowney and the men from Robbie's Cove found Beddoes beneath the rubble, his face noble in death. Across his body lay the faithful Hogan. Dead in her

bed, Mrs. Beddoes wore a smile of final peace, the decanter at her side.

As the pickup truck carried the bodies down the hill I said to Amy, "The rooks are gone. I guess that means Daylight Saving Time for Robbie's Cove."

Bullock nodded, puffing grimly on his pipe. Then he turned and looked at me. "Those are the ears of a good man," he said.

"Thank you," I said before I realized he meant the plastic replicas of Beddoes' ears on the beanie still on my head.

"Ears are the windows of the soul," said Bullock. "Your criminal ears are shifty, with cunning little twists and whorls. But these stand right out and say, 'Hi there. I am an honest man.' If I'd had my eyes peeled I might have heard what Beddoes' ears had to say."

"Don't blame yourself," I said. "Suppose this had been January. He'd probably have been wearing earmuffs."

Bullock thought for a moment, then nodded. "A good point, Simpson," he said. "A very good point."

"O" BITS

by RICHARD M. GORDON

I. The Duke of Clarence's death was fine:
He drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine—
A noble end! But it does appear a
Terrible waste of good Madeira.

II. That Antony and Caesar should want to squeeze her
Did not displease her,
But young Octavian's greedy grasp
Made Cleopatra clasp an asp.

III. Henry loved them; then he soured;
All his smiles turned into frowns.
Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard
Lost their heads when he took their crowns.

IV. For France the times were bleak and dark
Till Joan of Arc produced a spark;
A smarter martyr might have learned
That she who larks with sparks gets burned.

the *NEWEST* police procedural by

LAWRENCE TREAT

The way Inspector Mitch Taylor of the Homicide Squad got himself hooked into murder cases was for the books. Here he was ordering some window shades for his wife Amy—just minding his own business, you might say—and the next thing he knew he was in the doghouse with Amy and involved in a homicide case with the victim clasping some artificial flowers to her bosom, for Pete's sake . . . another brisk and breezy procedural yarn from Mr. Police Procedural himself . . .

C AS IN CRIME

by LAWRENCE TREAT

AFTER LUNCH INSPECTOR MITCH Taylor, Homicide, had this summons to serve. It had something to do with a stolen car racket that he hadn't even worked on, so there was no particular hurry. About all it amounted to was, the Lieutenant wanted to keep him busy. Which was okay with Mitch.

Before he started out, he went across the street and had a cup of coffee at the Greek's, where you usually ran into some of the boys that worked down the hall, in the Records Room or the Bureau of Motor Vehicles or one of the other departments. Most of the time you picked up a little of this and a little of that, but nobody was around this afternoon and all Mitch learned was that it was going to rain and it wasn't going to rain. Still, there are always two sides to everything, or at least that's what they tell you, so how can you argue about the weather?

Because Mitch had nothing better to do than stall around for a while, he fished inside his pockets to see what was there. What he dug up was that measurement he'd made for the new window shades that Amy wanted. He'd forgotten all about them, what with Joey getting sick last week and they almost had to call in the doctor. The kid was all right now, but as far as the window shades went, Mitch wasn't even sure where he was supposed to buy them. So he went over to the pay phone to consult with Amy.

He put his dime in and gave his badge number, which meant he'd get his ten cents back at the end of

the month. Mitch called Amy at least once a day, usually on somebody else's phone, on account it looked funny at headquarters when you called your own house too often. And while you could always cook up a good reason to explain it, the Accounting Department was just cheap enough to refuse to shell out. You had to pretty much watch your step.

The way it worked out, though, Amy wasn't even home, and Mitch got his dime back and sat down for a while. After thinking it over he decided to buy the window shades from the big mail-order house, which had its main offices in the same direction he was going.

He had car Number Four, his regular one, and he headed uptown. Naturally, he tended to his own business first—the summons could wait—and for once he had no trouble parking. He reported to the despatcher and said he was leaving his car for a few minutes—he needed a Men's Room. That covered him for fifteen minutes or so, and he went into the mail order place and looked around before going to the catalogue desk. It was at the rear with a bunch of offices behind it, and he walked up to the counter. There was nobody there at first, but then this dame showed up and asked him what he wanted, and he told her.

She had big soft eyes, like a spaniel's, but otherwise she wasn't much; he'd have passed her in a crowd seven days a week. While she was checking up on the shades for him he noticed this Miss America type come out of one of the offices back there, and then he noticed the big good-looking guy who acted as if he ran the place. Meanwhile, this spaniel-eyed female found the dope on the window shades and got set to write out the order. When she asked him his name and he told her, it seemed she knew all about him.

"Oh, Mr. Taylor," she said, perking up. "You're the detective, aren't you?"

Mostly, Mitch just did his job, with no fuss and no putting on the dog, but this was something new. Here he was practically famous—dames he had no idea who they were, they knew all about him because they'd probably seen his name in the paper. So he nodded and said, "That's right, I'm with Homicide." He ran his hand through his stiff, wiry hair, and he let his eyes kind of nail her down.

"Mr. Taylor," she said, "I know who you are and I need help. I'm afraid something's going to happen—please help me—you can!"

Any cop who took on a private investigation without putting it through channels ought to have his head examined, and Mitch had sense enough to duck. "Better tell the precinct about it," he said. "They'll take care of it."

"No, this is different. Only you—"

She broke off suddenly, and Mitch turned around. The way it

happens sometimes, a lot of people had come in at the same time. They crowded around the catalogue desk and they all wanted service and wanted it right away. The big good-looking guy sent Miss America to the desk and then took care of one of the customers himself. Anyhow, with people lined up like that, this spaniel-eyed dame got down to business and filled out the order for the window shades. And while she was doing it, Mitch asked her how come she knew about him.

She answered without looking up. "I know your wife," she said, and that ended Mitch's dream of being a celebrity. "Amy talks about you so much. She thinks you're just wonderful."

"She's pretty wonderful herself," Mitch said, and felt embarrassed. So with the gal's personal problem and all, he was glad to get out of the place.

He served the summons and then he cooked up something wrong with the car and brought it to the garage. By the time they decided the car was okay, it was almost five o'clock. Since it was a dull day, he got off early and went home.

He didn't mention this friend of Amy's until around the end of dinner. According to Amy her name was Natalie Freehan and she'd gotten divorced because her husband was a lush, and she was down in the dumps about it and he was getting deeper and deeper in the bottle and couldn't Mitch do something?

He sort of laughed it off, and then he told Amy what this Natalie dame had said—that something was going to happen and she was scared. Like Mitch said, it was probably some trouble about her husband, this Freehan. Only Amy nearly jumped out of her skin.

"You mean Natalie asked you to help her and you didn't do anything? Oh, Mitchell!"

"What could I do?" he asked. "My hands are tied until she tells me what she wants me for."

"Well, you might phone her now," Amy said. "Because a drunk like her husband—he can be dangerous."

So Mitch called, only there was no answer. Amy was sure something had happened, and Mitch was sure nothing had. He even looked up the movie ads to try and show Amy which one this Natalie could have gone to. After that, he and Amy talked about movies and made up their minds which ones they ought to see, and Amy seemed to stop worrying.

Mitch didn't think about Natalie any more, and why should he? He had plenty of other things on his mind, like who won the ball game he'd bet two bits on and whether to follow up on what that stool pigeon had said about the hijacked liquor, and so on. And in the morning he had to investigate an assault in a downtown restaurant. Some chef had crowned one of his helpers with an iron pot and the guy was in

the hospital. The chef claimed this helper had thrown a ladle at him, but it turned out all the helper had done was put too much salt in the stew, so what else could the chef do except crown him? Anyhow, Mitch asked some routine questions and got some statements, and then he came out of the restaurant and reported back to the despatcher. And what the despatcher told Mitch knocked him for a loop.

It seemed there was a homicide and the victim was Natalie Freehan, and she'd been carved up. When Mitch heard the name, the first thing that struck him was how Amy was going to take the news. But the next thing was, she might wonder if Mitch couldn't have prevented it. So he had to show he couldn't have done anything about it, regardless. Or better yet, if her husband hadn't killed her, maybe it was a burglar or something, and then Mitch would really be off the hook.

The Freehan dame's apartment was only a couple of blocks from where she worked, and Mitch was one of the last cops to get there. He had to push his way into the living room in order to report to Lieutenant Decker, Chief of Homicide. Decker was a tall guy with gray hair, and he was handling the Homicide Squad and the precinct detectives and the big brass and the Commissioner all in one breath. The body had already been taken away, and the Medical Examiner had done his stuff and decided that Natalie had been killed the day before sometime between three and seven.

This news didn't sit so good with Mitch, because he'd gotten around to phoning her a little too late. If he'd followed up on her while he was still in the mail order office, a lot of things might not have happened.

Still, there was no sense aggravating himself about it, so he asked Charlie Small to give him the dope. Charlie said they hadn't made much progress yet.

"A neighbor of hers—he's clean, though—he noticed a key sticking in the lock of her front door this morning, so he opened it up. The dead dame was lying on the rug, her hands crossed over her breasts and she was holding onto some artificial flowers."

"Somebody put 'em there?" Mitch asked.

Charlie couldn't answer a straight question with a straight answer. "What do you think?" he said. "That she got up after she was killed and picked herself some funeral flowers?"

Mitch frowned and stared at the bloodstains on the rug. "Knife wounds?" he said.

"Strangled her first, and then used a kitchen knife," Charlie said. "Looks like he really meant it, huh?"

"Don't ask me," Mitch said. "Ask him." Which shut Charlie up nicely, so Mitch went to the Lieutenant and gave him his private, inside in-

formation. How Amy had known Natalie, and how Mitch had seen her yesterday afternoon and she'd been scared, and how her husband was a lush. In the middle of telling, Mitch stopped short.

"Those flowers," he said. "What did they look like? What kind?"

"Forget-me-nots," Decker said, and that made it easy.

The wife who'd been threatened by an ex-husband who was a lush, the key left in the lock, the threats she was scared of and the sentimental flowers that only a drunken killer would pick—what more could you want? Except where'd he get the flowers from? And what had he been threatening her about?

Well, there was no point in complicating matters until you had to. Meantime, the Lieutenant sent Mitch and Charlie Small to get hold of this George Freehan and bring him in. His address was easy to track down. He was living in a third-rate hotel, and Mitch and Charlie just knocked on the door and told him they wanted him at headquarters, that they had a few questions he might answer.

He was a small puffy guy up to his ears in booze, and he acted like he'd been expecting the police any minute. He went along without even asking what for. They practically floated him out of his room and poured him into the elevator and then decanted him into the patrol car. He was talking most of the time, except you could hardly understand what he was quacking about.

Mitch figured it would take most of the day to sober him up, and it wasn't a bad guess, at that. All Freehan was good for that afternoon was, he could hold up one finger at a time and let them ink it and roll it on a piece of paper, to get his prints. And when his middle finger matched one of the bloody ones on the scene of the crime, the case seemed clinched. Still, you had to wait for the guy to sober up, otherwise you were just asking for trouble later on, in court.

What with one thing and another, Mitch was pretty busy, but he managed to be at headquarters when Amy came out of the office after seeing the Lieutenant.

"How'd it go?" Mitch asked.

Her lips quivered and her eyes were kind of watery, and all she could say was, "Oh, Mitchell!" Which was the same as saying it was all his fault, that he could have saved this Natalie dame, only he hadn't even bothered.

"Look," he said. "Somebody threatened her, and she had a complaint. If I took it myself, without going through channels, I'd get in trouble. We just don't work that way—you know that."

"But all she wanted was some advice about her husband," Amy said.

"I phoned her, didn't I?" Mitch said.

"She was dead by then," Amy said, and she put her arms around

Mitch and hung on tight. It did her good, for some reason, and when she stepped back she almost looked like she always did, smart, full of life, somebody real special.

"I know it wasn't your fault," she said, smiling. "Of course not." But what she meant was, she blamed Mitch for the whole business, only she wasn't going to push it. And while Mitch knew she'd try her damnedest to forget it, he was pretty sure it would stick in her mind and bug her for a long time.

He took her as far as the bus stop, then went back to headquarters. What it came down to was, if Mitch could show that Natalie had still been alive when he'd phoned, or if he could show she'd been killed for some reason that had nothing to do with what she'd wanted to tell him at the mail order desk, then he'd be squared away with Amy. So he asked the Lieutenant if he could go up to Natalie's place and poke around, and Decker said sure, go ahead, he'd been about to tell Mitch to try and find out what he could about those flowers. So Mitch went.

He started off with the super and got nowhere. Then he tried the cleaner's next door, with the same result, and then he went to the corner newsstand and the drug store and the bakery, and ended up with blanks all around. So he went back to the mail order place, only it was six o'clock by the time he got there and the offices were closed. And that made it a full day's work plus, so he went home for the night. After dinner he and Amy took in a movie.

Next morning, the first thing Mitch did was to go up to the mail order place and see this Miss America, whose name was Brenda Blake, and ask her about Natalie. Mitch's angle was, his wife had been a friend of Natalie's and so had Brenda, so maybe she could tell him things she'd hold out from any other cop.

"You knew who she was scared of," Mitch said. He kept looking at this Brenda in all the wrong places, or maybe they were all the right places. Anyhow, he kept looking, and she knew it. "Somebody was breathing down her neck," he said, "and she told you all about it. So who was it?"

"She was scared?" Brenda asked, innocent-like.

"Look, Miss Blake, you want me to draw you a diagram?"

She gave him a look like he was judging her for Miss Universe and she wanted to know did he take bribes, which Mitch made like he was willing to, and then some. So he said it again. "Who was she scared of?"

What with the deep breath this Brenda took, Mitch waited for her dress to pop. When it didn't, Mitch got back to business. "I'm just a cop," he said, "and I'm asking something simple. Who was it?"

She let her eyelashes flip around a little, which was supposed to push up his pulse rate. Then she an-

swered slowly. "I wasn't really a friend of hers. What makes you think I was?"

"You worked here together, the two of you. You probably spelled each other whenever you wanted a coffee break. Sure, you were friends."

"You don't know anything about it," Brenda said, starting to fuss. "She didn't do anything for me, I always got the dirty end. If there was a mistake, it was always my fault. If one of us had to work late or on a holiday, I had to do it. Do you call that being a friend?"

"So that's why you had this grudge against her," Mitch said, figuring if he needled Brenda he might get somewhere. "You were both out after the boss, and she landed him."

"Grudge?" Brenda said, like she didn't know the word. "On account of the boss? Why would I bother with a tinhorn like him? What would I want *him* for?"

Mitch saw he'd gone off course on that one, so he dropped it fast. "Okay," he said. "But who was she scared of, then?"

"I don't know," Brenda said. "And the man from the publicity department told me not to say anything that would involve the main office, and *he* can do things for a girl." She smiled and tried the deep-breath business again. "So why don't you talk to the man from the cleaning store? Natalie was always complaining about him. Why don't you go there, instead of annoying me?"

"Sure," Mitch said. "What's his name?"

"Hugo. And I'm telling you—if she was afraid of anybody, it was him."

With a lead like that a good homicide man couldn't miss, and Mitch didn't. He went back to the cleaning establishment and found this Hugo Tuttle, who stood six-three without shoes on and who had a funny twist to his mouth that always made him look like he was smiling down at you. Mitch kind of poured it on—why this Tuttle hadn't admitted being sweet on Natalie, or being in her apartment yesterday.

The apartment business was strictly a flyer, but Mitch got away with it. After five minutes or so the guy was begging Mitch to believe that all he'd done at Natalie's was open the door and look in and then beat it. He'd been there around five, yes. He'd come for a dress that she'd wanted cleaned. He knew the dress—it was the one that had the artificial flowers on it. He'd cleaned it before and she always cut the flowers off before he picked up the dress. She'd been clasping the flowers to her bosom (that was Tuttle's word), and she'd been dead.

No, he hadn't touched the flowers, he hadn't touched anything. He was sorry he'd looked in, maybe he shouldn't have, but the key was in the lock and so he opened the door. He'd almost keeled over at what he

saw, but he'd been afraid to call the police because they might accuse him of killing her.

Why was he afraid the police would accuse him? It took Mitch only a few minutes to learn that Hugo had a real yen for this Natalie, but that she didn't go for cleaners. He'd been sore at the way she'd turned him down, and he'd threatened her, yes. But he hadn't really meant anything—Mitch *had* to believe him.

Mitch didn't, so he called the despatcher and asked for help in bringing in a suspect, and down at headquarters he told Decker what Tuttle had said. The Lieutenant took the news like he'd been expecting it all along.

"I'll talk to him," he said. "The only trouble is, Freehan's ready to confess."

Seeing as how confessions weren't what they used to be, and maybe never had been, Mitch didn't even blink. "Think Freehan did it?" he said.

"Well," Decker said, "he admits going to the apartment around six or so, admits he was drunk and that he went there for a showdown. He wanted his wife back, but he doesn't remember what he said or did, except he claims he loved her and therefore couldn't have killed her, although he does remember putting the flowers in her hands and that she was lying stretched out on the carpet when he did it. Brother—save me from drunks!"

"He sober now?" Mitch asked.

"What's left of him is," Decker said. "But you go on a binge like he did and half of you gets boiled out."

"Yeah," Mitch said. "So it isn't exactly a confession."

"No. And you'd better see what else you can dig up on Tuttle."

Mitch dug and came up with a big zero, but while he was asking around, the lab matched up Tuttle's prints. That proved that he'd done a little more than open the door and just take a look, but it didn't exactly prove he'd committed a homicide.

That was about as far as they got in the next couple of days. The Homicide Squad were chasing leads till they were blue in the face, and Mitch missed dinner two nights in a row, and what for? Somebody said Natalie had come home early the day she'd been killed. Somebody else said they thought a girl friend had come to see her, but they couldn't describe her. Three anonymous tips named three different killers, and all three had 24-carat alibis.

What it came down to was there were two suspects, and the pair of them had motive and opportunity both, so which one of them should you pick? Ordinarily the answer to that wouldn't have bothered Mitch much. All that usually bothered him was drawing his paycheck and getting home in time for his favorite six o'clock news program.

But this time, with Amy thinking Mitch could have saved Natalie, the

case was riding him. He was on edge and he kept thinking how if he could show that Tuttle had knifed her, and would have knifed her no matter what Mitch might have done, then Amy would lose that funny look of hers. Only the more Mitch thought about it, the more mixed up it got. So he stopped thinking, which is supposed to rest the brain and let it come up with the solution. Except it didn't.

And to top things off, there was some kind of trouble about the window shades. The mail order place called up and said he should come down and straighten things out.

What with all the complications in the Freehan case, fixing up the window shade business sounded pretty simple and shaped up like a nice change of pace. Mitch went there the first chance he got. He walked back to the catalogue desk, and the female there who had probably been hired to take Natalie's place made this Brenda Blake look like a kid sister tagging along and nobody wanted her.

Her name was Lucy Pierce, and she had real class. While he was talking to her, Mitch could see Brenda mooching around in and out of the offices in the back, and it was pretty clear she was staying away from him. What he found out from Lucy was that this big good-looking guy, name of Andrews, was manager of the catalogue department and he'd hired her. Before Mitch got around to window shades, he knew that Lucy didn't like Andrews and expected trouble from him and was sorry she'd taken the job. She said Andrews was a chaser, he'd hired her for her looks, and Brenda Blake was jealous and giving her a hard time.

That was a lot of information, and Mitch digested it while this Lucy went to check up on the order sheet that Natalie had made out. What was wrong with it was, Natalie had either made a bunch of mistakes or else forgotten how to write, and probably both. Which added up to showing she'd been nervous, and something must have scared her so hard that her hand got to trembling. Since Mitch had been there when it happened, he ought to know whatever it was that had suddenly given her the jitters.

He tried to remember back. A bunch of people had showed up more or less at the same time, but they'd all been behind Mitch instead of in front of him. So—are you supposed to have eyes in the back of your head?

He asked this Lucy if he could have the order sheet, he might need it, and she said sure. He thanked her for getting it and he was starting out when he saw Jake Stubbins, Bureau of Frauds, come in and head for the offices in the rear. Jake was a tall stringy guy, almost as old as the Lieutenant only a lot balder, and he was a whiz at figures. Mitch said hello to him and asked him what he was doing here.

Jake lowered his voice when he answered. "They think somebody's been playing fancy with the books," Jake said. "Sounds like a racket I ran into once before—they fake the orders, then return the merchandise for cash and pocket the refunds."

"Who?" Mitch said.

"It's got to be somebody behind the mail order desk," Jake said. "I got a warrant for Andrews, he's the manager—he's either doing it or else he knows who."

"Maybe I better stick around and give you a hand," Mitch said.

Jake had to go and crack wise on that. "You gonna help *me*?" he said. "Did they finally get around to teaching you how to add?"

"You'd be surprised," Mitch said, "but you may have a little trouble bringing the guy in."

Jake shrugged. "He's just an embezzler, they don't make trouble."

"He may be mixed up in something else," Mitch said.

The whole thing had come clear to him, just like that. Andrews had been embezzling, and Natalie had caught on and could give him away, so Andrews had killed her to shut her up. Andrews was the threat she'd been talking about, and what had scared her into making those mistakes on Mitch's order form was Andrews coming out of his office just when she was ready to accuse him. She'd panicked not at what was behind Mitch, but what was in front of him.

He didn't think it all out in detail; he just knew. And he knew that Amy wouldn't blame him now —not after he showed that Natalie was mixed up in this mail order racket. So he decided that when Jake walked in to arrest Andrews, the manager would think he was getting pinched for the homicide and he might go haywire—which he did. He threw a punch at Jake and kind of pushed him across the room and then came bulling out as if he was going to commit mayhem. Mitch pulled his gun.

"Just take it easy," Mitch said. "We got some things to straighten out."

The Lieutenant, who always handled the main interrogation, straightened them out fine. He had the motive—Jake Stubbins had supplied that—and Mitch had supplied just about everything else. In fact, he'd guessed pretty much how everything had happened, so the Lieutenant had an easy time of it and ended up getting a confession from Andrews, made voluntarily and as legal as you could want it.

What the Lieutenant always did after he'd wrapped up a case was, he stepped out of his office and gave the Homicide Squad the lowdown, and after that he saw the reporters. Whoever had done most of the work or come up with a particularly smart idea, the Lieutenant usually took them along into the press room and gave them full credit. So Mitch, who'd done a smart piece of detec-

tion any way you sliced it, kind of rehearsed what he'd tell the reporters.

The way it turned out, though, he could have saved himself the trouble. The Lieutenant marched out of his office real businesslike and rattled off the main elements of the case, and then all of a sudden he was talking about Natalie and how she'd hurt her finger just before she'd seen Mitch. It seemed that was why she could hardly write, so Mitch had the wrong reason, and he'd never found out that she'd gone down to the infirmary right after he'd left. There they fixed up her finger and told her to see Andrews and tell him she was going home, which she did. After that, it was a cinch for Andrews to take a few minutes off and sneak over to her apartment and kill her, and then come right back to the mail order place.

It just happened that Mitch hadn't checked up on where Andrews was that afternoon, or where Natalie was, either, and the Lieutenant had the idea that Mitch had pulled a first-class boner. Mitch was ready to admit that maybe he'd been a little sloppy—the Lieutenant did have a point there. But what of it? The important thing was, Mitch was off the hook with Amy.

a *NEW* and irresistible short story by
ANDREW GARVE

Andrew Garve, whose readers grow in number every year, was born in England in 1908. He was a reporter and foreign correspondent for the "London News Chronicle," with Russia his "beat" from 1942 to 1945. Outside his writing, his chief interests are traveling and sailing. Here is one of his rare short stories . . .

Sixteen-year-old Larry Seton had been kidnaped and was being held prisoner in a place from which there was no possible escape. And even if his wealthy father paid the ransom, Larry knew his captors would never risk letting him go free. Larry faced a really impossible situation—and the reader faces an absorbing problem. But Larry, you'll find, was an ingenious and resourceful teen-ager, with an exceptional sense of improvisation.

"Line of Communication" combines many mystery-story elements—crime and detection, puzzle and suspense, inspired individualism and equally inspired cooperative police procedure, and in an unusual way, even a locked-room problem—at least, the problem of how to get out of a "locked room" . . .

LINE OF COMMUNICATION

by ANDREW GARVE

LARRY SETON WATCHED THE TWO men come up through the trap door. The thin one came first, warily, with the flick knife open and pointing. When he was clear the other followed.

The big man lowered the trap door, holding it with his foot while he made a looped twine handle from a spool he'd brought with him. The old rope handle had pulled out, leaving a hole, and the last time they'd come up they'd had trouble raising the trap door from above once it was shut.

The thin man crossed to Larry and gave him a piece of paper, a grubby envelope, and a ballpoint pen. "Okay, write," he said.

Larry wrote as instructed:

Dear Father,

I'm sending you this note so you'll know that what the men said on the

telephone was true. They're keeping me locked up in a room where no one ever comes. They say they'll kill me if they don't get the £50,000 and I think they mean it. They are going to phone you again at ten o'clock tomorrow evening. Please do as they say about the money and don't try to bring the police in. I'm in good health but rather scared. One of them has a knife. I hope I shall see you again. Larry

He addressed the envelope and handed it back with the note and the pen. The thin man read the note and gave a satisfied grunt. The big man then raised the trap door with the loop he'd improvised and the two of them backed down.

"You'll soon be okay now, mate," the thin man called, as he closed the trap door and shot the bolt underneath.

Larry doubted it. Not that he thought his father wouldn't pay the money. The old man was rich, and he'd take the one chance that was offered, however slender it seemed. He'd hope that the kidnapers would keep their word and let Larry go when the money was paid.

But Larry knew they wouldn't. They couldn't afford to—because he knew who they were, and they knew he knew. He'd seen them at his father's factory, where they'd been working as building laborers on a plant extension until a week or two ago. He didn't know their names, but if he ever got free again he'd be able to tell the police enough to make their capture certain.

So he wouldn't be allowed to go free. Once they'd got the money, they'd kill him. Larry had read the intention in the thin man's vicious little eyes.

He gazed desperately around his prison. It was a bare loft, about twelve feet by twenty, poorly lit and black with grime. It had no exit but the trap door, and no windows. The sloping raftered sides met in a square of flat roof with a skylight in it that had lost all its glass—but the skylight was at least ten feet up and barred with iron rods. There was no way of escape.

No chance, either, of making a fight of it—not a successful one. Larry was sixteen and well set-up—but you couldn't argue with a knife. *He* couldn't, anyway. And the kidnapers always came up together. They never gave him an even chance.

It would have been different if he had a weapon. But there wasn't anything in the loft that he could use. A few bits of glass on the damp boards beneath the skylight—but they were too small to be effective against a knife. A wooden orange crate that they'd brought up to serve as a writing table—too unwieldy to make much of a weapon.

Apart from that, they'd left him with almost nothing. A plastic cup and a plastic water container. A plastic bucket. A plastic plate which still held the remnants of his meager

supper. A few candles for use at night. The spool of twine that the big man had chucked into a corner after fixing the trap door. And that, literally, was all.

For a moment Larry concentrated on the new object—the spool of twine. It was a big spool, machine-rolled, and the cord was strong. Could he use it? Fantastic ideas chased each other through his head. Rig up a trip line? Weave it into some kind of net? Garotte one of the men with it? Not very promising . . .

If there had been a window he might have dangled something down and tried to attract attention. But there was no window. Or if the skylight had been lower, he might have tried throwing the spool through the bars, with a message on it. He wondered if it was possible.

He put the orange crate under the skylight and climbed onto it. The box was old and frail and gave out ominous cracks. Cautiously he raised his hand. He was still short of the bars by more than two feet. And it would be difficult to throw the spool through the bars, which were only about four inches apart. And even if he got it through, it would only go straight up and fall straight down again onto the flat roof. No good. He'd need a rocket to get it away from the roof . . .

A rocket! No chance of that, of course—but it started a train of thought . . .

He climbed down and stood considering. *Could* he? He gazed up through the skylight. Light clouds were moving steadily across the evening sky. Quite fast. There was plenty of wind up there—he could feel the draft through the opening.

He looked around, appraising his resources. The twine, the bits of glass, the wooden crate. The nylon shirt he was wearing. Yes, there was just a chance. Anyway, what did he have to lose?

He examined the bits of glass. There was one piece with a sharp edge. That should do. He examined the crate. The thin strips of wood that formed its sides would probably give him what he needed. It would take time—but he had plenty of that.

He lit a candle in the failing light and stuck it in his cup. Then he peeled off his shirt and spread it on the floorboards. There was more than enough material in the shirt tail, if he was careful and made no mistake. He'd better mark it out first. But with what?

He looked about him. Dirt from the floor mixed with water? Or dirt from the rafters? He ran a finger along one of them. It came away coated with soot. There was so much soot that he could scrape it off into his hand.

He made a little pile of it on the floor, puddled it, and applied some to a bit of the shirt with a sliver of wood from the crate. The mixture wasn't as good as ink, but it left a mark. Yes, it would do.

Cautiously now, using the crate as a straight edge, he sketched his quadrilateral on the nylon shirt. The last time he'd done this sort of thing was five years ago—but he hadn't forgotten the lore his father had taught him. It wasn't the size that mattered, but the proportions —and those he remembered. The two lower sides one and a half times the upper sides. Leave enough material for turning in and sewing. And four flaps for making pockets to hold the struts . . . That should do it.

Cutting out the shape was a long job. The nylon was strong and wouldn't tear easily. The piece of glass wasn't nearly as sharp as a pair of scissors. The final result was ragged at the edges—but it would serve.

Now for the struts. Pull one of the thin battens from the box. Score down it with the glass, half an inch from the edge. Deeper, now. Then the other side. Now a little pressure . . . The wood split and he had his vertical strut.

He worked quietly, methodically, intent on the job. The kidnapers had taken his watch and he could only guess at the time. Occasionally he lit a fresh candle from the stump of the old one.

Sewing the edges, and making the pockets for the struts, was another long job. He used a loose nail from the crate to make the holes, and twine from the spool to thread through them. He tied the struts where they crossed. Finally he stood back and examined his handicraft.

It wasn't much of a kite. All the same, if he could get it through the skylight, it should fly. When it was well up, he'd let go, and it was bound to fall soon, carrying the message he was going to write on it.

It was only when he began to think about the message that he realized he had almost no information to give. He had no idea where he was. He could remember nothing from the time he'd been knocked out till he'd come round in the loft. He thought he was in a city, because of the distant hum of traffic, but he didn't know if he was still in London.

A dirty loft at the top of a building—that was all the description he could give and that wasn't likely to bring rescue. He could say that his kidnapers had worked at the factory—but that wouldn't bring rescue either—certainly not in time. Besides, there wasn't enough room on the kite for a long message. With his improvised ink, the letters would have to be large and thick to be legible.

He pondered. There was no point in letting the kite loose without adequate directions. Better to keep it tethered, and say who had sent it up. When the wind dropped, it would fall, and someone would find it and follow the string. Yes, that was the best bet . . .

He wrote his message with laborious care. Big letters, well blacked

in. FROM LARRY SETON. Every newspaper reader would know his name by now. TELL POLICE. DON'T BREAK STRING. That should do it.

Once more he considered. Assuming the kite flew, how long a line should he give it? In a way, the shorter the better—it would be quicker and easier for the police to follow the string. But suppose it came down on a rooftop—or in a tree? It might not be found at all.

Better to let it fly high and have more than one message. Spaced along the string. Then, wherever it fell, there'd be a good chance that one of the messages would be seen. He cut out some strips of nylon and wrote the same words on each one.

Now he was ready to try the kite. He made the end of the twine fast to it and climbed again onto the orange crate. He could just manage to push the kite through the bars. It lay flat on top of them, stirring a little in the wind but not lifting enough to take off. Somehow he'd have to raise it, give it a start.

He thought for a moment, then broke another batten from the crate and set to work to cut it into strips. Four strips tied to each other with twine made a long rod. He climbed back on the crate and poked the improvised rod through the bars. At the second attempt he found the kite's balancing point and raised it on the rod. In a moment the wind caught it and it was off, straining at the twine, beautifully steady.

Larry could only guess how much twine he was letting out into the darkness above. At what he thought was a couple of hundred feet he tied on one of his strip messages. He let out more twine, then tied on another. Near the end of the string he tied a third.

Now for tethering the kite. The twine had been wound on a stout cardboard cylinder. Placed crosswise under the bars, that would do the trick. Of course, the kidnapers might notice it when they came up in the morning. But they might also notice that the twine on the spool was gone—or that the crate had been partly dismantled. The whole operation was a gamble.

With the end of the twine fast to the cylinder, Larry climbed once more onto the crate. He would have to stretch his arm to the limit to make sure the cylinder got wedged under and across the bars. Balanced on the crate, he reached for the skylight, straining, the cylinder at his fingertips . . . Then, without warning, with a sudden splintering crash, the crate collapsed under him. As he fell, the cylinder slipped from his grasp. When he looked up from the floor, he saw that it had been drawn through the bars and had disappeared.

He put on the remnants of his shirt, and his jacket, and sank to the floor in despair. With the kite loose, the message he'd written would help no one. FROM LARRY SETON. TELL POLICE.

DON'T BREAK STRING. Nobody would find him on that information. It had all been in vain.

Superintendent Grant, in charge of the Seton kidnaping case, was in his office with Larry Seton's father. He had just seen the letter that had arrived from Larry that morning. Now he and Seton were discussing what action to take. Seton, gray with anxiety and sleeplessness, wanted to pay the ransom and keep the police out of it. Grant wanted to set a trap. They were still arguing when Sergeant Ellis entered.

"This has just been brought in, sir. Found in North London—Primrose Hill."

The sergeant put a kite on the table. There was a short length of twine, about twenty feet, attached to it, with a frayed end where the string had snapped.

Grant read the message, fingered the black lettering, examined the fabric. "Could be another hoax," he said doubtfully. He'd already been led off on one false scent.

Seton shook his head. "It's genuine—I'm sure of it." His voice had an edge of excitement. "Larry and I used to make kites like this when he was a lad. We were pretty expert—and he's remembered the model. The proportions are the same, the shape's right. I'm as sure he made it as though he'd put his signature on it."

"I see." Grant grew brisk. "Where exactly was it found, Sergeant?"

"Hanging down over a window at twelve Lucy Street—a boarding house. Chap living there—name of Forbes—found it this morning and dropped it in at his local station."

"We might be able to find the rest of the string and trace it back," Seton said eagerly. "It might lead us to Larry . . ."

Grant nodded. "Let's go."

The Superintendent studied the upper part of 12 Lucy Street through binoculars. Presently he gave a grunt. "I can see it. It's hanging from the gutter—looks as though it goes over the top of the house. Let's try the next street."

They drove round and quickly picked up the trail again. From the house the string crossed the street at rooftop level. With many detours they continued to follow its route. In several places it was broken and they had to cast about for the next piece. Twice they were helped by the sight of scraps of white material attached to it.

They traced it over buildings, over the branches of a tree, across a coal yard, between two coupled coal cars on a rusty railroad track, past a group of men preparing to unload the first car, on over a factory roof. Then, when hope was rising fast, they came upon a cardboard cylinder hanging from a street light, with broken twine attached. Beyond, there was nothing.

"Larry must have let it go," Seton said, with deep dejection.

Grant nodded. "Maybe he was interrupted before he could make it fast. Bad luck. Still, we've got something to work on."

He returned to the police car and radioed urgent instructions.

It took a squad of policemen and a fire-department truck more than two hours to collect all the bits of string they could find. Each one had to be numbered and labeled and its exact position marked on a street map before removal. There were eight breaks, all of them at street crossings—caused, no doubt, by passing traffic.

Back at New Scotland Yard, Grant had the pieces of string put together and measured. Allowing for the street gaps where sections had been carried away, the total length was almost 2000 feet. The recovery data, now plotted on a big wall map, showed that the line had fallen, with much bunching and many twists and turns, in a roughly northerly direction from Lucy Street. To the point where they had found the cardboard cylinder the beeline distance was 1200 feet. Somewhere beyond that, perhaps a long way beyond, was Larry.

Grant said, "You're the expert, Mr. Seton. What would you expect to happen to a kite flying on a two thousand-foot string when the end was released?"

Seton shook his head. "It's hard to say. Every kite behaves differently. The strength and consistency of the wind would clearly be a big factor. The weight of the string would be another. In general, if there was a good wind I'd expect the kite to shoot up rapidly for a short distance, lifting the string with it. Then it would begin to fall, fluttering down, diving and looping, making a good deal of leeway with the wind and carrying the string with it. To find out what this kite did, one would have to fly it experimentally in exactly the same weather conditions—and that's obviously impossible."

"We don't even know when the kite was released," Sergant Ellis said.

Grant frowned. "What time was it found?"

"One o'clock this morning, sir. That was the time Forbes arrived home from a party. He got into bed and then he heard a tapping on the window. It annoyed him, so he went to see what was causing it, found the kite dangling, and yanked it in. He didn't put on a light, so he didn't see what was written on it till this morning . . . Anyway, he was sure it was one o'clock when he found it."

"Then just before one o'clock is the latest time it could have been released," Grant said. "Now what about the earliest time?"

"Well, Forbes said it wasn't there when he left for work yesterday morning, or he'd have seen it dangling."

"So it was released some time between, say, eight o'clock yesterday morning and one o'clock this morning. Seventeen hours . . . I wonder if the Met people can help us."

Grant was on the phone for some time, making notes as the Met man talked. His expression grew gloomier as he wrote.

"Not much help, I'm afraid," he said, as he hung up. "What you might call typical English weather. The wind yesterday morning was southwesterly, force five. In the afternoon it veered through northwest to north, dropping to force three. At night a narrow ridge of high pressure crossed London and the wind was northeasterly, force two at first, increasing to force three. Then in the early morning it backed again to northwesterly, force two."

"So we're no further forward," Seton said. "The kite was obviously released when the wind was in the northern quadrant—but which bit of the quadrant, and at what force?"

"If only there was some way of narrowing down the time," Grant said. He sat silent for a while. Then a speculative look crept into his face. "Those coal cars that were being unloaded—I wonder . . ."

Once more he reached for the telephone.

This time, when he hung up, his expression was jubilant. "A long shot—but it worked. Those two coal cars were shunted in just after ten o'clock last night—and the string fell between them. So now we know the kite was released between ten o'clock and one. I think I'll have another word with the Met office."

He made more notes as he repeated the information for the others to hear. "Ridge of high pressure—yes. Wind northeasterly force three up to five thousand feet throughout the period . . . Wind steady, not gusty . . . Now tell me, is there any place nearby where those conditions are being repeated at this moment? . . . Ridge has moved on—I see . . . Yorkshire? What part of Yorkshire? . . . Anywhere in the East Riding. And for how long? . . . About four hours." Grant glanced at his watch. "Thanks a lot."

He hung up. "Right," he said. "Let's go to Yorkshire and fly a kite."

Just under three hours later, an Army helicopter set down the police party on a disused airfield a few miles inland from the Yorkshire coast. A cool but gentle breeze was blowing steadily from the northeast. The sky was clear.

Grant positioned his men and Seton put the kite up. It rose quickly and smoothly as the knotted twine was let out. In a few minutes Seton was left with the bare cylinder. For a moment he held on. The kite was almost stationary, a mere dot against the blue.

"Right, let her go," Grant said.

Seton released the cardboard cylinder. It shot about fifty feet into the air, then drifted away out of sight as the kite hesitated, began to dive, turned and twisted, and slowly fluttered to earth.

A distant watcher signaled where the kite had fallen and the police got to work, checking the distance from release point to impact point, and the direction. Grant noted the results in his book. The kite had fallen 2250 feet from the point of release, on a magnetic bearing of 215 degrees.

Back at the Yard in the early evening Grant drew a circle on the wall map—2250 feet from 12 Lucy Street, on the reverse compass bearing.

"Well, that should be it," he said. "Somewhere in there. Now what kind of place are we going to look for?"

"A pretty high building," Seton said. "With some sort of exit to a roof, I should think, or I can't see how Larry could have got the kite up."

"Probably not a private dwelling," Sergeant Ellis added. "Kidnapers wouldn't risk keeping anyone shut up where there were other people around—particularly after all the publicity there's been. These villains usually hide out in vacant premises —empty warehouses, garages, that sort of thing."

Grant nodded. "I was thinking the same. An industrial building of some sort. I've just had the lab report on the substance used for the message on the kite. It's soot . . . Right, let's go."

The circle, they found, enclosed an area of dingy tenement buildings, a few factories, a scrap-metal dump, and a surprising amount of waste ground. Only the occasional new housing units relieved the squalor.

Grant divided his force into groups, each with a walkie-talkie, and allotted them streets. Every building of the slightest interest was to be reported on and discussed.

Within the circle itself they found nothing. Grant widened the field of search to take in the surrounding streets. It was almost dusk when Sergeant Ellis suddenly exclaimed, "How about that, sir?"

Grant looked ahead at the building. A blackened sign on the wall read: "Oakley Furniture Company. Depository and Repairs." It was a tall building, Victorian Gothic with a kind of tower at one end.

As they drew nearer, Grant saw that it was in fact only the skeleton of a building. Fire had gutted it. Notices above the corrugated iron fence enclosing the site warned: "Danger. keep out." But not everyone had kept out, for two of the corrugated sheets had been forced apart, leaving a two-foot gap.

Cautiously Grant led the way through the gap. He saw at once

that not all the building had been destroyed. At the tower end there was a flight of stone steps, intact. They climbed. Soot lay thickly everywhere—soot from the fire.

Through a broken door on the first landing they saw junk, broken furniture, black and abandoned stores. Tensley Grant pointed—to a dirty spool of twine. "Used for furniture repairs," he said softly. "This is it."

They came to a closed door. Voices were audible from inside. Superintendent Grant gently tried the door. It opened a fraction. Sergeant Ellis moved quietly up beside him.

"Right," Grant said, and they burst in. Two men were playing cards on the floor by candlelight. They sprang up.

"Okay," Grant said, "take it easy. We're the police. Where is he?"

The thin man with the vicious little eyes gave an involuntary glance upward. Seton shouted, "Larry!"—and made for the ladder.

NEXT MONTH . . .

***NEW* detective *short novel*—complete!**

HARRY KEMELMAN's *Man on a Ladder*

10 *NEW* short stories—including

CHRISTIANNA BRAND's *Here Lies . . .*

JACOB HAY's *The Belkamp Apparatus*

Honor Roll reprints by

JOYCE CARY

THOMAS WALSH

(see page 56)

ANTHONY BOUCHER'S HONOR ROLL

of Distinguished New Mystery Stories published in American magazines

EQMM's percentages

1962	43.6%
1963	50.8%
1964	44.1%
1965	55.0%
1966	50.0%

Nearly one-half of the distinguished new mystery stories published in all American magazines in the last 5 years (252 stories out of 516) appeared first in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine;* and these 252 Honor Roll stories did not include the superior reprints, both short stories and short novels, which are offered by *EQMM* each month.

***"Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* is the best crime-fiction periodical ever published."**

—Anthony Boucher
The New York Times Book Review,
October 30, 1966

(Continued from other side)

Yours for only $1

$40.30 worth of new mysteries
(IN PUBLISHERS' ORIGINAL EDITIONS)

Includes 9 Erle Stanley Gardner's and 2 more new thrillers

BECAUSE this is our "Silver Anniversary," we're offering you ELEVEN top-drawer mystery thrillers — worth $40.30 in original publishers' editions — for the astonishingly low price of ONLY $1.00! You get the *very latest* Perry Mason along with two more new mysteries in a big 3-in-1 edition . . . *PLUS* 8 more Gardner greats in 4 double-length, hard-bound volumes. We make this spectacular offer to mystery fans in order to celebrate our Anniversary and to show you the many advantages of membership in The Detective Book Club.

Cream of New Mysteries for LESS than 97¢ EACH

As a member you are offered the cream of the brand-new mysteries by top writers. Each month you get THREE of them complete in ONE handsome volume (a $10.50 to $11.95 value in publishers' regular retail editions) for only $2.89. You need NOT take any specific number of books — only those you want after reading the free Club "Preview" sent to you well in advance. Your books are clean and fresh, delivered right to your door.

SEND NO MONEY — Just Mail Postcard for ALL 11 Mysteries

You may cancel membership any time you please. These ELEVEN exciting stories are only the beginning of your fun and savings. SEND NO MONEY NOW—just mail postcard to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

SEND NO MONEY — JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 15-303

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB 7-DL
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the FOUR double-length, hard-bound editions of Perry Mason & Donald Lam-Bertha Cool thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 volume Club selection containing Erle Stanley Gardner's latest Perry Mason and 2 more great mysteries. I enclose NO MONEY IN ADVANCE; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them all and owe nothing, or keep ALL FIVE volumes, containing ELEVEN first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of ONLY $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future Triple Volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charge). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. (Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR ELEVEN MYSTERIES • NO POSTAGE NEEDED

Mr. / Mrs. / Miss .....
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address .....

City ..... State ..... ZIP .....

EXCITING 25th ANNIVERSARY OFFER

11 Top Mysteries for $1.00

AS A NEW MEMBER

including 9 great Erle Stanley Gardner hits

YOU GET 4 Perry Mason bafflers and 4 Donald Lam-Bertha Cool thrillers (which Gardner writes under the name A. A. Fair) in 4 hard-bound 2-in-1 volumes.

1 The Case of the WORRIED WAITRESS
A worried waitress is up for murder and a worried Perry is stuck with a *blind witness*.

2 TRAPS NEED FRESH BAIT
Donald Lam investigates a want ad that is looking for a *patsy* — for a *murder*.

3 The Case of the BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR
Perry agrees to help a lovely girl — who turns out to be a *cunning murderess*.

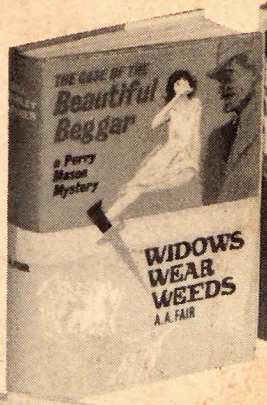
4 WIDOWS WEAR WEEDS
The police, and *witnesses*, say DONALD LAM put that knife in Calvert's back!

5 The Case of the TROUBLED TRUSTEE
Dutton was *with* Palmer. Dutton's gun *killed* Palmer. Can Perry ever save Dutton?

6 CUT THIN TO WIN
Donald Lam pays $10,000 for an "accident" that now looks like an alibi for *murder*.

7 The Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS
Perry's client and Mrs. Trent have a mutual "friend" who wants to *kill them both*.

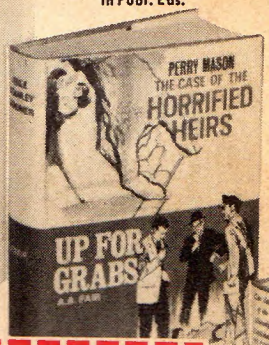
8 UP FOR GRABS
Nurse Doon is terrified. She *knows* the patient who "left" the hospital was DEAD.



$7.00 in Publ. Eds.

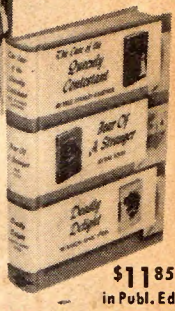
$7.45 in Publ. Eds.

$7.00 in Publ. Eds.



$7.00 in Publ. Eds.

YOU ALSO GET the latest Perry Mason plus 2 more new mysteries in this 3-in-1 volume



$11.85 in Publ. Eds.

9 The Case of the QUEENLY CONTESTANT
by *Erle Stanley Gardner*
Perry is involved with a $2,000,000 estate, blackmail, and a *baffling murder*.

10 FEAR OF A STRANGER
by *Rae Foley*
A strange killer wants Kay Forbes' $400,000 — and Kay *can't stop him*.

11 DEADLY DELIGHT
by *Aaron Marc Stein*
A simple engineering job on a *church* turns into *murder*.

(See other side)

FIRST CLASS
PERMIT No. 47
Roslyn, N. Y.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
No postage stamp necessary if mailed in the United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576